



## Safe Sanctuary Policy of Salem United Methodist Church

The purpose of the Safe Sanctuary Policy is to ensure the safety of all children and members at Salem United Methodist Church (UMC) in Diggs, Virginia. Through this policy, Salem demonstrates our strong and unwavering commitment to the care and spiritual growth of all, including our children, youth and vulnerable adults. Changes to the Safe Sanctuary Policy cannot be made without approval of the Administrative Board of Salem UMC in Diggs, Virginia.

### SECTION I

#### GENERAL

- 1) Salem UMC is to utilize the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary criteria available at <http://www.vaumc.org/safesanctuaries> as the basis for any and all actions taken herein. The criteria available here is to be referred to before any actions are taken to ensure Salem UMC is in compliance with Conference guidelines.
- 2) For definition purposes, an adult is a person eighteen (18) years of age or older. A vulnerable adult is a person eighteen (18) years or older with diminished physical, mental or emotional capacities. A youth is defined herein as any juvenile under the age of majority (18 years old in Virginia) but is not legally emancipated or is not actively raising their biological or adopted child. A child is a person between infancy and age eleven (11).
- 3) A Safe Sanctuary Oversight Committee is to be established to create a child protection policy and to provide interpretation and recommendation of the policy to the Administrative Board. The Safe Sanctuary Oversight Committee is to be comprised of the following leaders:
  - a) Pastor
  - b) Administrative Board Chairperson
  - c) Trustee Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson
  - d) Lay Leader

- e) Pastor/Parish Relations Committee Chairperson
- f) Sunday School Superintendent
- g) Youth Group Leader
- h) Children's Ministry Representative
- i) At-large member(s)

## SECTION II

### RECRUITMENT, SCREENING AND HIRING OF STAFF

- 1) In order to provide Salem UMC the best protection against allegations of abuse or misconduct by church members who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults within and outside the church, a process for vetting those individuals is to be implemented to minimize any risk to the church. The following church members/personnel are to be screened for any risk in dealing with children:
  - a) Paid Staff - The following Paid Staff are to be screened by the Pastor/Parish Relations Committee, with background checks completed in accordance with the Salem Church Background Check Policy:
    - i) Youth Leader
    - ii) Other paid staff as directed by the Pastor/Parish Relations Committee (PPRC)
  - b) Volunteer Staff - The following Volunteer Staff are to be screened by the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee, with background checks completed in accordance with the Salem Church Background Check Policy:
    - i) Children/Youth Sunday School Teachers and the Sunday School Superintendent
    - ii) Nursery Workers
    - iii) Youth Coordinators
    - iv) Vacation Bible School Area Leaders
  - c) Pastor and Spouse - The Pastor and spouse (if applicable) are to have background checks completed in accordance with the Salem Church Background Check Policy. The Pastor is vetted by the District and Bishop and does not require any further screening; however, a copy of their background check should be provided for record. The Pastor's spouse, if involved with ministries with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, is to be screened by the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee with a background check completed in accordance with the Salem Church Background Check Policy.

- d) Occasional Workers - Salem United Methodist Church should endeavor to create a group of “Occasional Workers” that form a pool of personnel to draw from for “fill-in” in areas that may need a replacement on short notice. These members do not regularly teach or interface with the youth, but are to have been vetted by the above Volunteer Staff process in Paragraph II.1.b above. Additionally, other church leaders (e.g. Sunday School Superintendent, Administrative Board Chairman, Lay Leader, etc.) may be vetted to act as “rovers” to go from room to room to monitor and ensure there are no issues.
  - e) Leaders in Ministries outside the Church - It is recognized that some events will require volunteers to interact and monitor children who have not been vetted through this process. Some of these volunteers may not be church members or may be from outside the community.
- 2) All personnel screened are to have a Personal Interview Summary completed and retained in the individual’s file for at least 3 years after the person is no longer serving in that capacity. The PPRC may require personnel to complete application forms, personal reference forms, or other documents as deemed appropriate. These forms are to be retained in the individual’s file for at least 3 years after the person is no longer serving in that capacity. The file will be maintained by the Pastor or PPRC chair.
  - 3) No person is to be considered for any position dealing directly with the children and youth, who has not been regularly attending Salem United Methodist Church for at least six (6) months. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis by the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee, but should not be made on a regular basis.
  - 4) For persons monitoring youth, there should be a minimum of a three (3) year age gap between the oldest youth in the group and the leader of the group. A five (5) year age gap is preferred.
  - 5) Adults who have been screened by the leaders of the children, youth, or vulnerable adult ministries may be utilized as “rovers” to go from group to group to monitor and ensure there are no issues.

### SECTION III

#### SUPERVISION

- 1) When supervising activities involve children and youth at Salem UMC, two adults are to be present at all times. Children and youth under the age of sixteen (16) are to be checked in and out of a church sponsored activity by a parent or legal guardian, or by a person authorized by the parent/legal guardian.
- 2) Youth can have access to a telephone, cell phone or pager when groups are at or away from the church facility.
- 3) One-on-one interactions with children and youth are to be conducted with an open door or a door with a window and visible to all.

- 4) An orientation is to be required for Paid and Volunteer Staff who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults, training/refreshing them in the church's policies and child abuse education. Refresher training is to be provided at least once a year. First Aid/CPR training is recommended.
- 5) In the event that only one adult will be present at a children or youth event, a parent/legal guardian can give written or verbal permission for their child or youth's participation.
- 6) Whenever Salem UMC sponsors an activity involving children or youth, anyone has the right to visit and observe the activity, classroom or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.
- 7) All classroom and office doors are to have a window or visibility from the hallway or are to remain open while occupied. If this is not feasible, the door may be closed but is to remain unlocked. Windows are to be kept free from adornment and all curtains left open.
- 8) No child or youth is to be left unsupervised at any time unless there is an emergency.
- 9) Whenever Salem UMC transports children or youth away from the church grounds, no youth should drive to or from events unless approved by a parent/legal guardian, and adults should never transport a single child or youth by him or herself, unless permission has been given by a parent/legal guardian. All traffic laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia are to be followed when operating a motor vehicle.
- 10) All activities in which children and youth will be traveling from church grounds (including overnight trips) require written permission as well as pertinent health information and a parental/guardian signed release for treatment form.

#### SECTION IV

#### RESPONSE TO INDIVIDUALS WITH VIOLENT OR SEXUAL CRIMINAL HISTORY

- 1) The Safe Sanctuary Policy at Salem United Methodist Church, Diggs, Virginia is set up to provide guidance to the Administrative Board and Pastor in the event that a convicted sex offender is discovered within the church congregation or wishes to attend Salem Church and announces their intent to the Pastor or other member of the congregation. This policy is to also provide guidelines on how to handle personnel whose background check comes back with a documented record of violence against children, women or the elderly and vulnerable adults.
- 2) It is not the intent of Salem UMC to deny access to those honestly seeking a closer relationship with God. However, Salem is to take any and all measures necessary to provide a safe environment for everyone who attends Salem, especially children, youth and vulnerable adults.

- 3) Salem UMC is not to actively search any sex offender databases to determine if anyone within the congregation is a convicted sex offender. However, those who are required to have a background check performed are required to sign a form that states if they have been charged or convicted of any crime against children, any sexual assault, any violent crime, or any form of abuse against children, the elderly, vulnerable adults or a spouse. See the Salem Church Background Check Policy.
- 4) The Safe Sanctuary policy is to be initiated when one of the following situations occurs:
  - a) A church member identifies someone in the congregation as a sex offender or of committing a violent crime. Proof must be provided to the Pastor.
  - b) A convicted sex offender or someone with a significant criminal history identifies to the pastor or other church member their intent to attend Salem UMC but does not want to create any situation that would violate any court ordered conditions of their continued freedom.
  - c) Anyone who checks “YES” to any question in the Background Check Policy dealing with any crime against children, any sexual assault, any violent crime, or any form of abuse against children, the elderly, vulnerable adults or a spouse.
  - d) Any person whose background check comes back positive for any crime against children, any sexual assault, any violent crime, or any form of abuse against children, the elderly, vulnerable adults or a spouse.
- 5) For a member whose background check comes back with findings, the issue concerning the person’s continued participation in their church position (Sunday School Teacher, officer, etc.) is to be handled in accordance with the Salem Church Background Check Policy.
- 6) For a member who reports their intent to attend Salem UMC after being convicted of any crime against children, any sexual assault, any violent crime, or any form of abuse against children, the elderly, vulnerable adults or a spouse; or after a member reports their knowledge of someone currently in attendance who has been convicted of one of the aforementioned crimes, the Pastor (or in the absence of a Pastor, the Administrative Board Chairman) is to immediately request a meeting with the person to perform the following:
  - a) Confirm with the person that they have been convicted of one of the aforementioned crimes.
  - b) Require the person not attend any function at Salem UMC without having an appointed “mentor” in attendance with them at all times. At least two covenant partners are to be appointed to accompany the person while they are in attendance at Salem UMC. The mentors are to be identified beforehand and are to maintain confidentiality of the situation. Arrangements are to be made between the mentors and the person for meeting on the church premises. Only one mentor is required to be with the person while on the church premises.
  - c) In the event neither of the appointed mentors is able to attend a function with the member, the pastor may appoint an interim mentor.

- d) Require no contact with any children at Salem UMC, other than incidental contact that is considered normal in an everyday setting. In no circumstances is the individual to initiate any personal or intimate contact with any minor child/youth/vulnerable adult or be alone with any minor child/youth/vulnerable adult at any time.
- e) Require the person to permanently remove themselves from any position of authority within the church. This is to include as a minimum:
  - i) Sunday School Teacher
  - ii) Church Officer
  - iii) Representative on the Administrative Board
  - iv) Leader of any Bible Study held at Salem UMC
  - v) Any committee membership
- f) The person is to sign a memorandum of agreement prepared by the Pastor outlining the above stipulations and agreeing to abide by these restrictions while in attendance at Salem UMC. Failure to abide by this memorandum of agreement, or refusal to sign the covenant is to be grounds to dismiss the person from the church. In extreme cases, a restraining order may be obtained.
- 7) While being sensitive to a person's privacy, Salem UMC will not hide the fact that any person has been convicted of one of the aforementioned acts, and is to disclose this information to anyone within the church who asks.

## SECTION V

### REPORTING AND RESPONSE TO ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- 1) Anyone may report suspected abuse or neglect; however Section 63.21509 of the Code of Virginia requires that designated professionals who have contact with children immediately report their suspicions. It is not necessary to prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. Reports can be made by calling your local Social Services Department or the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-422-4453. Reports can be made anonymously. If you choose to provide your name, it will not be released, except by court order. Persons reporting in good faith are immune from civil and criminal liability to Section 63.2-1512 of the Code of Virginia.
- 2) Should there be an allegation of child abuse involving a child, youth or vulnerable adult connected with Salem UMC and its ministries, the matter is to be reported immediately to the Pastor or to the PPRC Chairperson in the event the allegation is against the Pastor. The Pastor or PPRC Chairperson will ensure that appropriate actions are taken. If the alleged abuse occurred at Salem UMC or in the context of its ministries, the following actions are to be taken:
  - a) Every allegation of abuse is to be treated seriously.

- b) Prayer is to be offered for the church and all persons affected by the allegation. Care and comfort is to be provided for the alleged victim and all involved. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received and otherwise made known.
  - c) Confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused is to be maintained.
  - d) All procedures that are taken in handling the allegation are to be documented.
  - e) No formal investigation is to be conducted by the Pastor or PPRC Chairperson; only information and documentation gathering is to be performed. Nor is the accused to be confronted, or any discussion to take place with the accused or any associated family member or guardian.
  - f) If the accused has assigned duties within the church, immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, the Pastor is to remove the accused from further involvement with any children or youth until official notice has been provided that the situation has been resolved.
  - g) Professionals (i.e. an attorney, a representative of the church's insurance company, etc.) are to be contacted and involved as needed.
- 3) Should allegations be brought to the Pastor or PPRC Chairperson, the following steps should be taken.
- a) Immediately notify the Virginia Department of Social Services of the allegation within 24 hours of the notification as stated by Section 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia.
  - b) Immediately notify the District Superintendent. According to the Virginia Annual Conference Policy on Sexual Misconduct, the District Superintendent is to contact the Conference Response Team. The Conference Response Team is to send a representative to Salem UMC within 24 hours to conduct an investigation.
  - c) Immediately notify the church's insurance company.

## SECTION VI

### SOCIAL MEDIA

- 1) Salem UMC is to protect the privacy and identity of all persons under 18 years of age and all vulnerable adults in online writings, postings and discussions. In today's world, the internet possibilities are enormous; Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, Tumbler, Wee World, Blogging, email, and texting are but a few of the choices facing our congregation. Therefore, when referring to social media in the bullets below, all types of internet social media are included.
- 2) Adult employees and staff are not to post photos or video on social media related to Salem UMC without written consent from a parent/legal guardian. Last names and addresses are never to be cited.

- 3) Photos of children and youth may only be published or posted on social media related to Salem UMC after a photo release has been signed by a parent/legal guardian. Photos used in other media (i.e. newsletter, website, blog, etc.) must not include any identifying information of minors without permission. Photos taken in a public setting (i.e. Easter Egg Hunt, Christmas pageant, worship service, etc.) can be posted without permission so long as no names of children or youth are provided.
- 4) Photos may only be posted to social media related to Salem UMC (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, etc.) by system administrators. Any social media forum specifically related to children and youth ministries at Salem are to be “closed” groups, so only those approved by the administrator(s) can access the group. Passwords to accounts are not to be divulged. Privacy settings are to be established to protect the identities and photographs of children and youth.
- 5) All social media related to Salem must have at least two system administrators. If an administrator is no longer associated with the ministry, that individual’s administrative status is to be revoked as soon as practicable.
- 6) Do not “tag” a child or youth in social media posts without permission from a parent/legal guardian.
- 7) Salem UMC encourages positive conduct on social media in order to best reflect Christian values. Some suggestions include:
  - a) An adult should not initiate a social media contact/connection with a child or youth.
  - b) If the child or youth initiates contact, ensure his or her parent/legal guardian is aware of and permits the social media contact/connection.
  - c) If there is any communication with children and youth on social media, it should be conducted in a public forum or with multiple parties on a private forum. This is also a good practice when texting or e-mailing.
  - d) Social media, texting or e-mailing is not an appropriate means of counseling.
  - e) If you would not want to see your post on the church sign, website or bulletin board, do not post it via social media (or by text or e-mail). Once something is posted, it is impossible to fully recover or erase from the Internet. There is no expectation of privacy on social media and in technology.
- 8) Salem UMC does not condone cyber-bullying and is to work to create safe spaces for positive interaction on social media.
- 9) Salem UMC will educate those who request assistance, especially young people and their families, in effective use of social media and technology to live out their Christian witness in what they write, post, share and view.



## SECTION VII

### TRAINING

- 1) In order to ensure that people working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults are trained in how to handle an abuse disclosure, a yearly Safe Sanctuaries training is to be conducted. The below personnel are to be required to attend the training, every other year, except that those who are new to their position are to be required to attend the training in the first year of their new position. The Pastor is to be responsible for setting up the training.
  - a) Pastor
  - b) Lay Leader
  - c) Administrative Board Chairperson
  - d) Pastor Parish Relations Chairperson
  - e) Persons serving in ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults (Paid or Volunteer)
  - f) Others that wish to attend or are requested to attend
- 2) For all persons wishing to join Salem United Methodist Church, or transfer their membership to Salem, the pastor is to review this Safe Sanctuary Policy as part of their orientation process.
- 3) Requests for copies of an updated policy can be made to and fulfilled by the Pastor or one of the Trustees.

## SECTION VII

### POLICY REVISION

- 1) Revisions to this policy are only to be made by the majority vote of the Administrative Board of Salem United Methodist Church, Diggs, Virginia.

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2019.

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Craig Holmberg  
Chairperson, Administrative Board  
Salem United Methodist Church, Diggs, Virginia

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Rev. Bertina J. H. Westley  
Pastor  
Salem United Methodist Church, Diggs, Virginia

**REVISION RECORD****Safe Sanctuary Policy of Salem United Methodist Church**

REV	DESCRIPTION OF REVISION	APPROVAL		
		ORIGINATOR INITIAL	APPVL DATE	ABC INITIALS
A	INITIAL ISSUE	GKM		
B	2019 ANNUAL REVIEW AND REVISION	BJHW	10/2/2019	