

## **SALMON CREEK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

12217 NE Highway 99  
Vancouver, WA 98686

### **SAFE CHURCH POLICY**

Effective: November 20, 1999

Revised: August 2008

Approved by: Chairman, Administrative Council  
Chairman, Staff-Parish Relations Committee

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Working with others is rewarding and challenging. In the present social and legal climate, this work is more challenging with potential liabilities which may arise from reports of alleged abuse, either physical or verbal, alleged neglect, and other interpersonal situations which may result in risk. As a result, Salmon Creek United Methodist Church has special steps to assure a safe and nurturing place for all participating in our ministry.

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*The Safe Church Policy of Salmon Creek United Methodist Church provides for a safe and nurturing environment for all who participate in its programs.*

#### **SECTION I - INTRODUCTION**

##### **A. Policy Statement**

This policy is to prevent and detect the abuse of persons in our care. It is our desire to stop abuse by rendering it impossible. These standards apply to all personnel both paid and volunteer unless otherwise indicated. All personnel involved in church activities shall be familiar with this policy. Salmon Creek United Methodist Church, hereafter referred to as "the Church," prohibits all forms of sexual, physical and emotional abuse, and sexual harassment, in any activities sponsored by the Church. It is the intention and responsibility of the Church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy.

##### **B. Responsibility.**

The Staff Parish Relations Committee is charged to administer this policy. Paid church staff are required by law to report matters described herein. After a reported incident, the Staff Parish Relations Committee may take disciplinary action as necessary. All discussion and information received under this policy will remain confidential in locked church files for five years; reporting procedures may include notifying insurance carriers.

### C. Definitions

1. Child Abuse: An abused child is one less than eighteen years of age whose parent or other person legally responsible for his or her care: (1) Inflicts or allows to be inflicted serious physical injury, (2) Creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of serious physical injury, (3) Commits or allows to be committed a sex offense against the child including: rape, sodomy, forcible touching; patronizing, promoting or permitting prostitution; incest; and using a child in a sexual performance, such as promoting a sexual performance by a child in person, on video, on computer, or in a still photo.

2. Child Maltreatment (including Neglect): Maltreatment means that a child's physical, mental, or emotional condition has been impaired, or placed in imminent danger of impairment, by the failure of the child's parent or other person legally responsible to exercise a minimum degree of care by: (1) Failing to provide sufficient food, clothing, shelter, education, (2) Failing to provide proper supervision, guardianship, or medical care (refers to all medical issues, including dental, optometric, or surgical care), (3) Inflicting excessive corporal punishment, abandoning the child, or misusing alcohol or other drugs to the extent that the child is placed in imminent danger.

3. Sexual Harassment: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

### SECTION II - PERSONNEL POLICIES

1. Screening process: All paid staff and volunteers who work with minors will complete the following forms.

a. Paid staff:

- (1) Criminal Records Check
- (2) Employee/Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form (Attachment 1)
- (3) Employment Application

b. Volunteers who work with minors will complete the following forms:

- (1) Criminal Records Check
- (2) Employee/Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form (Attachment 1)

2. Any adult who provides transportation to minors for the Church will submit a current and valid driver's license to be kept on file.

3. Selection criteria: Individuals found to have undeclared criminal history, convictions involving child abuse, or have been convicted of child related convictions which may impair ability to effectively perform the functions of the position being applied for, will not be hired or allowed to volunteer.

4. Training

a. All paid staff and volunteers will be familiar with the Safe Church Policy.

b. Selected staff will be trained in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid.

The training should include the use of universal precautions, e.g., gloves and mouth to mouth barriers. This training should be optional to the volunteer staff and any cost involved will be

assumed by the Church. The Church will keep a copy of each person's certification or program completion card on file.

c. Training for the correct use of Fire Extinguishers will be given to all paid staff and offered to volunteers as an option.

d. The Safe Church Policy will be made available to all members and prospective members of the Church.

e. The church shall provide training for those in regular contact with children and youth and other selected ministries. Additional training may be required at the discretion of the Directors of Youth or Children's ministries.

### SECTION III: GENERAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

1. To the extent possible, staff members and those supervising children and youth shall maintain visual line of sight and avoid being alone with a child or youth and any guest.
2. The personal boundaries and comfort levels of all persons shall be respected at all times. For example, some people like being close and hugging. Others do not like close contact. Personal comfort space between people is different for everyone; adults must be aware of the appropriateness of such contact on an individual basis. (See "Touching")
3. Parents are encouraged to visit, observe and participate in all activities whenever possible.
4. Eighteen is the minimum age for all persons supervising children and youth. Trained youth may perform as "leaders" or "assistants" when supervised by an individual 18 years of age or older. Leaders must be at least five years older than those they lead.
5. Diversity in all group activities is encouraged. Individuals of any ethnic, social, religious or economic background should find a welcome place to develop and explore their faith, relationships, and talents. Individuals have the unqualified right to be free from disparaging comments, insults, racial epithets, or written or spoken communications which reflect negatively on that person's race, heritage, sexuality, physical condition or ability, or other characteristic fundamentally a part of that person's identity.
6. Adults, who have been certified by the Director of Youth/Children's Ministries or the Pastor, will perform all transportation to and from events. All persons providing driving services shall be alert and in good condition to operate a motor vehicle and shall have a valid state drivers license to operate the class of vehicle being used. Furthermore, certified drivers shall have proper insurance and current vehicle registration for privately owned vehicles used. Vehicles shall be legally safe and "street legal". Private vehicles will have working seat belts; they shall be used at all times. Drivers shall be 23 years of age or older in order to transport youth or children.
7. In the case of an emergency, a supervising adult will use a first aid kit with protective equipment. Minors are to attend injuries of others only when absolutely necessary and only with the appropriate protective gear. To the extent possible, the sponsoring ministry shall

provide an adult trained in First Aid for all activities conducted away from the church, especially for outdoor activities such as hiking, climbing, skiing, and mountain biking.

8. Written consent for participation shall be obtained for all activities conducted away from church premises. Parents or guardians shall be informed accurately and in a timely manner prior to any activities that include risk (rock climbing, swimming, water skiing, snow skiing, ropes courses, etc.). Similarly, they shall be advised by the activity director of plans for safe participation, training prior to the activity and emergency procedures tailored to each event.

9. No individual participating in church activities shall be subjected to hazing or initiation rituals, particularly those that may involve spanking, verbal or physical abuse of any description, or removal of any items of clothing. Persons shall never be subjected to activities such as stripping, body decoration, or exposure or touching of body parts normally covered by swimsuits, even in situations intended as pranks or jokes. It is church policy this type of activity is never considered a prank or a joke.

10. There will be periodic safety inspections to be conducted to ensure physical safety of facilities.

11. All events are to be open and observable by others at all times. This allows monitoring of child-to-child as well as adult-to-child behavior. Youth are accountable to staff members.

12. Adults should avoid dressing or showering with youth but should schedule such activities to be performed alone.

13. In instances where groups sleep overnight at an activity, sleeping arrangements are made to keep genders separate and allow for privacy. Sleeping bags or beds will not be shared.

14. Touching: The following standards from the American Camping Association will be followed at all church activities.

- a. Touching should be on the hand, shoulder or upper back only.
- b. Never touch a child or youth against his or her will, unless to prevent injury or danger. This includes tickling.
- c. Never touch a child when the child shows discomfort with the action, whether expressed verbally or non-verbally.
- d. Never touch a child unless in the presence of another staff member or responsible adult.
- e. Never touch where normally covered by a bathing suit, unless for clearly medical reasons and then with supervision by another adult.
- f. Be aware of the body language and mood. Do not assume that a child wants a hug or physical touch. It is safer to ask permission or pose a question such as "Do you want a hug or are you cold?" "Would you like me to put my arm around you?"
- g. Positive attention can be shown through listening, eye contact, smiling, talking, and including the child in group activities.
- h. Students shall not be touched in any manner which can be construed to have inappropriate intent.

15. Ratios of Care: The following child-to-staff ratios are mandatory for all overnight activities, off-premises activities, or when a group is alone in the church. There will always be at least two supervising persons. These ratios may be made more stringent as circumstances dictate.

<u>Persons Attending</u>	<u>Standard Adult Supervision</u>
Nursery and Preschool	1 adult to 4 children
Children in grades 1 - 4	1 adult to 6 children
Youth in grades 5 - 12	1 adult to 7 youth

16. Students with Special Needs for Emotional Support Or Counseling: Parents of children or youth with special needs will advise the Director of Youth Ministries, Children's Ministries or the Pastor of characteristics or histories that may place others at risk. Violent or deviant behavior histories shall remain confidential but should be communicated at an early opportunity. While it is church policy to include all children in church activities, parents may be required to provide structured guidance or special supervision for special needs. The sponsoring ministry will cancel activities that cannot proceed without assurance of the safety and adequate supervision of all.

17. Personnel who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance with zipping, buckling, clean-up or wiping, two adults need to be present, one of whom may be a high school aide. If it is impossible for 2 adult to be present, the bathroom door must remain open. Diapering of infants may be done in a classroom or nursery provided 2 adults or aides are present.

18. Photographs, videotaping, or any use of recorded likeness of individuals participating in church sponsored events will only take place with their consent. Should subject representations be used by the church or individuals of the church, for anything in the public arena, written permission will be obtained from the individual prior to recording the representation (Attachment 3)

19. Discipline: Discipline must be administered in such a way as to help each child develop self-control and assume responsibility for his or her actions through clear and consistent rules and limits appropriate to the ages and development of the children in care. Adults in charge must use acceptable techniques and approaches to help children solve problems.

a. Any discipline used must relate to the child's action and be handled without prolonged delay on the part of the staff, so that the child is aware of the relationship between his or her actions and the consequences of those actions.

b. Isolating a child in a closet, darkened area, or any area where the child cannot be seen and supervised by an adult is prohibited.

c. Where a child's behavior harms or is likely to result in harm to the child, others, or property, or seriously disrupts or is likely to seriously disrupt group interaction, the child may be separated briefly from the group, but only for as long as is necessary for the child to regain enough self-control to rejoin the group. The child must be placed in an area where he or she is in

the view of, and can be supervised and supported by, an adult. Interaction between an adult and the child must take place immediately following the separation to guide the child toward appropriate group behavior.

d. Corporal punishment is prohibited. Corporal punishment means punishment inflicted directly on the body including, but not limited to, spanking, biting, shaking, slapping, twisting or squeezing; demanding excessive physical exercise, prolonged lack of movement or motion, or strenuous or bizarre postures; and compelling a child to eat or have in the child's mouth soap, foods, hot spices, or other substances.

e. Withholding or using food, rest, or sleep as a punishment is prohibited. Methods of discipline, interaction, or toilet training which frighten, demean, or humiliate a child are prohibited.

## 20. Observation of a Known or Suspected Person with a Criminal History on Church Grounds/Property.

a. In the event that it becomes known that a person (or persons) who are a known criminal is attending our services and/or other church functions and may interact with the children, a church staff member will be notified of this persons presence. The identification may be made from a web site, news article, or other source.

b. Once notification has taken place, the following steps will be taken:

(1) Confirmation of the information and a determination of whether or not this person may pose a threat.

(2) an appropriate plan of action will be agreed upon. This may include such steps as prohibiting any access to the Sunday School and its classrooms, no participation in any youth activities, limiting the individual to Sunday services, etc.

(3) The person involved will be informed of the plan of action which will also be communicated to the staff or a designated member of the Church. It is incumbent upon the Church staff to ensure that the plan of action is being followed. If it is not, local authorities will be contacted.

SECTION IV: CHURCH NURSERY: The nursery shall adhere to all portions of this policy. Additional nursery policies are contained as an addendum to this document. See Attachment 4.

## SECTION V: INCIDENT REPORTING

1. An Incident Report Form (Attachment 2) will be completed in every case of an incident whether involving accident, injury, abuse, suspected abuse, etc. In addition, separate reporting may be made as necessary (police, Child or Adult Protective Services, etc.).

2. Staff and volunteers at Salmon Creek United Methodist Church, may witness or discover incidents of actual or suspected abuse and/or neglect. Child Protective Services (CPS) and Adult Protective Services (APS) of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services investigate abuse or neglect allegations in concert with law enforcement agencies.

a. Suspicions of abuse must be reported. If staff members or volunteers encounter situations which cause them to suspect such incidents they should be reported immediately to a paid staff member, the Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries, or

the Pastor. The paid staff will contact the appropriate agency upon receipt of a report. The Child Protective Services telephone number for Clark County is

**360-993-7901 (24 hour number—seven days a week).**

b. Information to be reported to APS or CPS (Reporters may remain anonymous).  
Description of suspected abuse or neglect situation. Provide as much information as possible:

- Date of occurrence (if known)
- Name of child or adult and parent or guardian.
- Age (if known)
- Address (if known)
- Telephone number (of parent or guardian if known)
- Other factual information that may be helpful

c. Staff will not investigate instances but will report them, as above, to enable those trained in such investigations to conduct the investigation.

#### ATTACHMENTS

1. Employee/Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form
2. Incident Report Form
3. Consent Agreement for Website, Videotape, and Photograph
4. Nursery Room Policies and Procedures for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers