

**SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY**  
**Aldersgate United Methodist Church**  
**6610 Vaughn Road**  
**Montgomery, Alabama 36116**

**Statement of Covenant**

**In all ministries with children, youth and adults, we are committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be "... surrounded by steadfast love,...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (Baptismal Covenant II, *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44)**

**Need for Policy:**

**God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from all types of abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (*The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church—2004*: copyright 2004 by The United Methodist Publishing House, pp.201-202).**

**Studies estimate that large numbers of boys and girls are sexually abused before the age of 18. Child Protective Services receives each year millions of reports for child abuse, neglect and even death of children and youth. (*Safe Sanctuaries* by Joy Melton) We covenant to be aware of our legal responsibilities and to comply with those responsibilities and to act justly in the best interest of those who have been abused or are most vulnerable to abuse.**

**It is the policy and covenant of the Alabama-West Florida Conference and Aldersgate United Methodist Church to do everything possible to prevent physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse against children, youth and adults involved in any ministry sponsored by any church within the Conference. Therefore, it is the commitment of Aldersgate United Methodist Church to support and implement a policy to assure that all children, youth and vulnerable adults are protected.**

**Implementation of Policy:**

**The requirements of this policy apply to all authority figures, volunteers and staff including those who work as:**

- 1. Primary leaders of grade 7 and above must be 19 years of age or older and four years older than the oldest youth involved. Primary leaders of infants through grade 6, must be 19 years of age or older**
- 2. Assistants, defined as persons who lend aid to the authority figure and act at the direction of the authority figure, including volunteers, interns, and camp counselors, must be a minimum of 12 years of age and four years older than the oldest participants with the permission of the Director of Children's Ministries for special event such as Vacation Bible School. These assistants must be competent to assist in the activity, based on judgment of staff member,**

**and may not be counted as an adult in the child/adult ratios if under the age of 19. If they are under the age of 19 they may not lend aid unless two authority figures are present**

**All staff and volunteers who work with children or youth at Aldersgate UMC will be required to have a background check, conducted through the Church Administrator's office. All records related to these background checks will be kept in a confidential and secure manner. This does not apply to the Weekday Children's Ministries as the Department of Human Resources sets guidelines for daycares.**

**Definition of Sexual Abuse – Any sexual activity with a child or vulnerable adult, whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care situation, in any organized ministry, whether at the church or away in any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse).**

**Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children or vulnerable adults in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling; penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas; intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, inappropriate internet activity, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.**

**Screening of All Staff and Volunteers – A screening process for recruiting, screening, and hiring paid staff and volunteers who work with children and youth shall be implemented. The process shall include a thorough review of the application, references, and church affiliation. A multi-state criminal and sexual offender background check shall be conducted by a reputable company. No one is exempt from this policy. A yearly session to review and discuss the Safe Sanctuaries Policy shall be conducted to include all staff members and all volunteers.**

**Reporting Abuse Requirement – Alabama's mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting law states that all school teachers and officials, social workers, day care workers or employees, and members of the clergy as defined in Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence, or any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child, when the child is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect, shall be required to report, or cause a report to be made orally, either by telephone or direct communication immediately, followed by a written report to a duly constituted authority (Montgomery County Department of Human Resources @ 334-293-3100 or Montgomery Police Department @ 334-241-2651).**

**Safe Sanctuary Response to Allegation –**

- 1. The adult volunteer/employee shall immediately report to his/her supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.**
- 2. The supervisor shall complete a Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse and immediately report to the Senior Pastor or Church Administrator.**
- 3. The supervisor will report allegations of child abuse immediately to the Department of Human Resources and local law enforcement according to the Code of Alabama.**

4. After reasonable cause is determined by the Senior Pastor, he/she shall contact the District Superintendent and the Chairperson of Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.

#### **Appropriate Response Toward Victim –**

1. Seek appropriate emergency care for the victim, if abuse occurs while victim is in church care.
2. Notify parent/guardian of the victim. If victim is in church care, take necessary precautions to assure the child's safety until parent/guardian arrival. If abuse involves parent/guardian, arrange to secure the safety of the victim until Department of Human Resources/Police Department can provide safety for the victim.
3. Protect evidence (area, room) until proper authorities can investigate.
4. A log of every action taken should be recorded, along with supporting documentation. Date, time and signature of person taking the action should be recorded in the log. An activity log and other supporting documentation should be kept in a secure and confidential file by the Senior Pastor or Church Administrator.
5. Provide pastoral care to victim and family.

#### **Appropriate Response toward the Accused –**

1. If abuse occurs while accused is still on the premises, treat the accused with dignity, but immediately remove him/her from further involvement with minors.
2. Remind accused of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and that the allegation must be investigated.
3. Provide pastoral care to accused and his/her family.
4. Maintain confidentiality at all times.

#### **Six Month Rule**

All volunteers must demonstrate an active relationship in good standing in a local congregation or campus religious organization for a minimum of six months. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve only in an assistant capacity with two other non-related adults.

#### **Two Adult Rule**

It is the policy that a minimum of two non-related adults be utilized in all programming with children, youth and at risk adults. An exception to this requirement is Children's Sunday School where husband and wife teams are allowed to volunteer without the need for a third person present. Extra diligence and supervision will be provided by the Director of Ministries to Children and Their Families. When it is impossible to staff with two non-related adults, an additional adult will serve as a floater with visual and physical access to all areas. Classroom doors must remain open when a floater is used.

### Open-door Policy

Classrooms or child care rooms shall be open to visitation at any time without prior notice by staff, parents and other volunteers.

### Sign-in and Sign-out Procedures

Sign-in and sign-out procedures shall be in place for all ministries for and with children.

### Adult/Child Ratios

Two adults should be present at all times. Adults and authority figures are not permitted to be alone with a child or youth. This includes, but not limited to, automobile, classroom, and room for overnight stay.

Aldersgate UMC adult to child ratios:

- 0 to 18 months	2 adults to 8 children
- 18 months to 2 1/2 years of age	2 adults to 12 children
- 24 months to 36 months of age	2 adults to 14 children
- 2 ½ years up to 4 years	2 adults to 16 children
- 4 years up to school age	2 adults to 20 children
- School age up to 8 years	2 adults to 22 children
- 8 years and older	2 adults to 24 children

When children of mixed ages are together, the ratio of adult to child shall be based on the youngest age group present with the largest number represented. Children ages 3 and under will be together with the proper ratio of adults to children.

The ratio for children with special needs shall be 2 adults to 2 children.

Assistants must be at least 12 years old and 4 years older than the oldest participant in the activity. Assistants may not be counted as an adult in the child/adult ratios.

### Overnight Programs:

Overnight events include, but are not limited to, summer camps, retreats, camp-outs, lock-ins, and any other event that lasts through the night. The adults staying with the young people must be the same gender as the young people. Adults shall never share a bed with a young person. The adults should not be in a room alone with a young person.

Motel/hotel settings should be selected, when possible, with rooms opening into an interior hallway. When possible, adjoining rooms should be selected with doors between rooms left open. Hallways and rooms should be checked on a planned schedule.

### **Transportation:**

**All drivers of children and youth must have a criminal background check and a check of the driving record. Appropriate insurance will be in effect at all times. Drivers must be 25 years old unless approved by the insurance company and Vehicle Committee. Safety policies and guidelines for the operation of church-owned vehicles have been established and are to be followed at all times.**

**A signed notarized permission slip must be on file for each child and/or youth traveling on all church sponsored trips. The permission slip must include all information needed in case of an emergency. A signed permission slip for each individual trip may be required by the Director of the event. Two adults must travel in each vehicle at all times when children and youth are present.**

**When private vehicles are used to transport young people for programmed church-related events, leaders should ensure that appropriate insurance is being maintained by both the church and the private driver.**

### **Mentoring Programs**

**Adults working with mentoring programs must have background checks. Clear written guidelines must be established as to where the mentoring programs will take place and the boundaries set for the meetings. All meetings must be held in a public place. All adults must follow Aldersgate UMC policy and guidelines for working with children and youth. Mentoring shall take place in a group setting, with at least two unrelated adults present at all times.**

### **Counseling Sessions**

**Counseling sessions with children, youth and vulnerable adults must be held in an area where the door of the room is left open during the entire session. A counseling session shall never be held in secret, even if the person being counseled makes that request.**

### **Interpersonal Boundaries**

**Adult workers with youth and children shall wear appropriate dress and use appropriate language. Adult workers are expected to use appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement. The Directors of Children and Youth activities will supervise this requirement.**

### **Home Visitation**

**When making home visits, two non-related adults shall visit youth or children. If a child or youth comes to visit in an adult's home, the visit shall be moved outside or to a public place. Educating young people of these requirements is very helpful.**

### **Sports Activities**

**Those serving as referees/umpires as well as coaches/assistant coaches will be required to have criminal background checks. It is expected that either the coach or assistant coach will be present at all practices and games. Parents are expected to be present for all practices and games.**

### **Cyber issues**

**When utilizing pictures and videos from the Alabama-West Florida Conference and Aldersgate United Methodist Church events, no names are to be posted for those under 18 years of age. The policy established for Aldersgate UMC, for the use of photographs and videos on the web, bulletin boards, and printed material, must be adhered to completely.**

**Those in authority and assistants are to be accountable for cyber communications.**

**Firewalls on computer systems at Aldersgate UMC must be in place and kept up to date.**

**Volunteers and employees at Aldersgate UMC shall maintain Christian principles when using social networking sites.**

## **POLICY FOR SECURING BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR STAFF**

**Background checks are required for all new employees and present staff at Aldersgate. Trak-1 Technology will be used to administer the background check. The Church Administrator will administer each background check. Each individual to be checked will sign an authorization form before the background check is administered. Those individuals who will be used as drivers for church vehicles will be required to have a criminal and motor vehicle registration check. Those individuals who will not be driving the church vehicles will be required to have only a criminal background check.**

**Results for current staff returned as “undesirable” will be forwarded to the Personnel Sub-Committee composed of the Pastors, Church Administrator and the Chairperson of the Personnel Committee. This Sub-Committee will determine if this individual should be allowed to work at Aldersgate UMC. If a person is determined to be unacceptable as a staff person, a letter will be written to the individual informing the person the background check results were not acceptable. If the person wishes to have a hearing before the entire Personnel Committee, the person should inform the Church Administrator and a date will be set for the hearing. At the hearing the individual will be allowed to review the results of the background check and ask questions. The Personnel Committee members will review the record and make a final decision. The individual will be notified of the final decision in a letter via certified mail.**

**For new employees, the results of the background checks will be reviewed by the entire Personnel Committee prior to hiring a new staff member. Results of each individual background check will be held in strict confidence. All background check reports will be filed in a locked area of the church office.**

## **POLICY FOR SECURING BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR VOLUNTEERS**

**Background checks are required for all volunteers who work with children and youth at Aldersgate. Trak-1 Technology will be used to administer the background check. The Church Administrator will administer each background check. Each volunteer will be required to sign an authorization form before the background check is administered. Volunteers who are certified drivers for church vehicles and who will be driving the vehicles while transporting children and/or youth, will be required to have a criminal and driver record background check. Those volunteers who will not be driving the vehicles for children and youth sponsored events will be required to have only a criminal background check.**

**The results of the background checks will be reviewed by the Church Administrator and Pastors. Volunteers with cleared background checks will be approved to work with children and youth. Results will be held in strict confidence and filed in a locked area of the church office.**

**Results from a volunteer background check that are returned as “undesirable” will be forwarded to the Safe Sanctuaries Sub-Committee composed of the Pastors, Church Administrator, and Church Council Chair. This Sub-Committee will determine if this individual should be allowed to work with children or youth at Aldersgate UMC. If a person is determined to be unacceptable as a volunteer, a letter will be written to the individual informing the person the background check results were not acceptable. If the person wishes to have a hearing before the entire Safe Sanctuaries Board, the person should inform the Church Administrator and a date will be set for the hearing. At the hearing the individual will be allowed to review the results of the background check and ask questions. The Safe Sanctuaries Board members will review the record and make a final decision. The individual will be notified of the final decision in a letter via certified mail.**



**I, \_\_\_\_\_, have received and reviewed a copy of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy for Aldersgate United Methodist Church. I understand this policy applies to my employment and responsibilities at Aldersgate United Methodist Church. If I have questions related to this policy, I understand I should seek clarification from either my supervisor or the Church Administrator.**

**Employee's Name \_\_\_\_\_**

**Employee's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Supervisor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Church Administrator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Date filed in Employee's Personnel Record: \_\_\_\_\_**

## **SAFE SANCTUARIES BOARD**

**The Safe Sanctuaries Board of Aldersgate UMC will be composed of the Pastors, a representative from Trustees, Church Council Chair, Youth Director, Children's Ministries Director, Church Administrator and two Lay Leaders.**

**This Board will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Aldersgate UMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy. The duties of the Aldersgate Safe Sanctuaries Board are:**

- the Board should meet at least twice each calendar year**
- the Board will report directly to the Church Council**
- the Board will ensure compliance with the policy**
- the Board will ensure that all volunteers and staff are adequately trained in the requirements of the Aldersgate Safe Sanctuaries Policy**
- the Board will inform the congregation annually of the contents of the policy**
- the Board will ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the signs of abuse and how to respond to abuse**
- the Board will assist with investigations as needed**

## **PROCESS FOR TRAINING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Staff Training**

**The Church Administrator will direct the training for the Aldersgate UMC staff regarding this policy.**

**The training shall include:**

- all staff members will attend an annual meeting for awareness of the Aldersgate UMC policy**
- staff working with children and youth will attend a detailed information session related to the implementation of the Aldersgate Safe Sanctuaries policy**
- all staff working with children and youth will attend an annual Child Abuse Session conducted by a DHR employee which will include information related to identifying signs of child abuse, reporting procedures for alleged incidents of child abuse, information on Alabama child abuse laws and other pertinent information**
- any other areas of need and/or interest**

### **Volunteer Training**

**The Director of Children's Ministries and the Youth Director will be responsible for the training of all volunteers in the children and youth ministries of Aldersgate UMC.**

**The training will include:**

- an annual detailed information session related to the requirements of the Aldersgate Safe Sanctuaries Policy**
- information related to notarized signed permission forms, procedure for reporting an incident, reporting suspected child abuse, and information on Alabama Child Abuse Laws**
- any other areas of need and/or interest**

**SAFE SANCTUARIES  
AUTHORIZATION AND REQUEST TO RUN BACKGROUND CHECK**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize Aldersgate United Methodist Church to request the release of information regarding any record of criminal charges or convictions and/or driving records maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state, or national file, and including but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed against minors.

I do release the information holder from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request.

Signature of applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's name (first, middle, maiden, last): \_\_\_\_\_

Print all other names that have been used by the applicant (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security number: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's license number: \_\_\_\_\_ State issuing license: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Volunteer:**

**According the Aldersgate Safe Sanctuaries Policy, every volunteer will be required to have a criminal background check. Those driving the vehicles for children and youth will also be required to have a driving background check.**

**Attached is a copy of the Policy for Securing Background Checks and the Authorization Form. Please complete the Authorization Form and return to the Church Administrator, leave in the church office in a sealed envelope, or place in the mail to my attention. This information will be kept in strict confidence.**

**Thank you for giving of your time in ministry to the children and youth of Aldersgate.**

**Regards,**

**William R. Haigler  
Church Administrator**