



## ABERNETHY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Updated Safe Sanctuary Policies —  
Maintaining a Safe Church, Fostering a Safe Faith Community

**The Safe Sanctuary Committee** has been meeting since early Fall discussing and developing policies for Abernethy UMC. While AUMC has had a Safe Sanctuary plan in place, we all agreed that updating the policies and procedures AND spending time educating and training the congregation and staff would:

- 1. Help us be more accountable to following the policies**
- 2. Create an environment that is safe and welcoming for both members and visitors**
- 3. Support our church's goal of expanding programming for children and youth**

One of the points the committee agreed on is that there are other populations besides children and youth that may need a voice of advocacy (people with disabilities, senior adults). We have decided to use the term “vulnerable populations” which means any group of people who may need others to look out for their well-being.

Our policies are written as general statements. We will be working on procedures and details as throughout the winter and be meeting regularly with the Administrative Council for feedback then for final approval.

The policies are listed below. In an effort to make you aware of areas that are specifically critical for the congregation and staff to follow, I have noted areas that the procedures will cover in Safe Ministry Practices. PLEASE NOTE: Those areas are simply examples at this time—they have not been approved by the Administrative Council as procedures.

### **Recruiting, Screening, and Hiring Staff and Volunteers**

*Policy:* In order to create a safe environment for vulnerable populations, Abernethy United Methodist Church will engage in recruiting, screening, and hiring practices that provide the current church leaders and staff with adequate personal and professional information about potential staff and volunteers.

### **Education and Training**

*Policy:* So that the congregation and staff have an awareness of Safe Sanctuary and engage in the church's adopted policies and procedures, Abernethy UMC will provide ongoing and timely education and training on issues related to abuse/neglect, the safety of vulnerable populations, and any modifications made to the Safe Sanctuary plan.

### **Safe Ministry Practices**

*Policy:* In order to comply with United Methodist doctrine and polity as well as the State of North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services policies on abuse and neglect, Abernethy UMC will engage in ministry practices that are safe and healthy for the congregation and staff AND make modifications as necessary to the environment, level of supervision, and activity participation for the welfare of vulnerable populations.

(Continued on reverse)

Procedures will include:

**2 adult rule minimum**—all activities including VPs will have at least 2 adults in the presence, more if needed based on size and age of group

**5 year older rule**—all adults will be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth (a good rule of thumb is at least 23 years old)

**Visual supervision**—all activities must be visible and VPs must be visually supervised by the minimum number of adults needed to keep them safe

**Open door counseling**—no one-on-one meetings will occur behind closed doors with the pastor or other staff

**No staff/volunteers under age 18 in charge of supervising vulnerable populations**—youth can help with activities but cannot be in charge, adults must be present

**Advance notice/consent from families**—for field trips, special activities, etc; when adults guests are attending a VP function

Participation covenant—to be decided

**Education for families, staff, volunteers on safe practices**

**Overnight trips**—must have at least 1 male, 1 female; emergency contact info must be left at church

**Transportation**—no staff or adult in capacity as church volunteer may transport VPs one-on-one

**Forms**—emergency forms on all volunteers, staff, and children

**Confidentiality**

### **Addressing Issues of Abuse and Neglect**

*Policy:* Abernethy UMC will adopt procedures and practices in its church administrative policies and Safe Sanctuary plan that designate a course of action should there be allegations of abuse/neglect occurring on or off the church campus with members, volunteers, and/or staff.

The staff, the Administrative Council, and I are asking for you not only to familiarize yourselves with these, but also to be committed to adhering to them so that we can be a stronger, more vibrant church. We understand that by actively committing to these policies, we will all need to consider how we can each take ownership of making sure our church activities and administration comply with the policies.

**If at any time, you have questions about an activity or situation, please do not hesitate to contact Laura Overbey, Mary Culbertson or Cameron Kempson. We would be glad to answer any questions you have or come speak to a class or group.**

Finally, we are working on putting together a Children and Youth Education Council which will eventually oversee the Safe Sanctuary plan. They will also be helping us educate the congregation and making sure we are supporting all church volunteers working with vulnerable populations. If you have any suggestions as to how we can offer a hand to our church volunteers or staff, please let us know.

**ABERNETHY UMC Safe Sanctuary Committee**