

**SALEM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
MANHEIM, PENNSYLVANIA**

**CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND REPORTING POLICY**

The purpose of this Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting Policy (“Policy”) is to announce the existing policies and procedures of Salem United Methodist Church (“Church”) with respect to child abuse prevention and reporting.

**I. WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?**

Consistent with the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (“CPS Law”), 23 Pa.C.S. § 6301, and for purposes of this Policy, **the Church defines “Child” to mean any person under the age of 18 years, and “Child Abuse” to mean any of the following:**

- (i) Any act or failure to act causing non-accidental serious physical injury to a Child;
- (ii) Any act or failure to act causing non-accidental serious mental injury to a Child;
- (iii) Any act, failure to act or series of such acts or failures to act by a person which creates an imminent risk of serious physical or mental injury to, or sexual abuse or exploitation of, a Child; and
- (iv) Serious physical neglect constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a Child's life or development or impairs the Child's functioning.

Please note--no child shall be deemed physically or mentally abused based on injuries that result solely from environmental factors beyond the control of the parent or person responsible for the child’s welfare (e.g.: inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing, medical care).

**II. WHO MUST REPORT CHILD ABUSE? WHO MAY REPORT CHILD ABUSE?**

**Any Church employee and any Church volunteer expected to have contact with children through participation in a Church-sponsored activity, camp, conference, retreat or program, *must report* suspected Child Abuse that he or she personally witnesses or reasonably suspects has occurred or is occurring on Church grounds or while under the care, supervision, guidance or training of any person in connection with a Church-sponsored activity, camp, conference, retreat or program. In addition, any person who has reasonable cause to suspect that a Child is being or has been subjected to abuse *may report* such abuse in accordance with Church Policy as described herein. Any person who makes a good faith report of Child Abuse pursuant to this Policy will not be subjected to retaliation.**

**REGARDLESS OF LEGAL REQUIREMENTS, EVERY MEMBER OF THIS CHURCH AND PARTICIPANT IN ITS PROGRAMS SHOULD CONSIDER HIM- OR HERSELF RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPPORTING VIGOROUS EXECUTION OF THIS**

**POLICY AND FOR ENSURING, MORE GENERALLY, THE SAFETY AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH ENGAGED IN THE CHURCH'S PROGRAMS, TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE.**

**III. EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER ELIGIBILITY POLICIES**

A. In no case shall a person be eligible to be a Church employee or a Church volunteer expected to have contact with children, if that person's criminal history information indicates either adjudication as a "perpetrator" or conviction for Child Abuse (as herein defined) or related offense, at any time and in any jurisdiction, or if that person is currently facing charges of Child Abuse or related offense in any jurisdiction.

B. In no case shall a person be eligible to be a Church employee or volunteer expected to have contact with children, if that person is named in the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's central register as the perpetrator of a founded report of Child Abuse.

C. In no case shall a person be eligible to be a Church employee or volunteer expected to have contact with children, if that person refuses to sign the Participation Covenant Statement in the form designated by the SPRC, or to provide criminal history information as may be required.

D. A person deemed ineligible to be a Church employee or volunteer expected to have contact with children shall not be permitted to function as such in any way, shape or form.

**IV. MANDATORY EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER BACKGROUND VERIFICATION**

**All Church employees and all Church volunteers expected to have contact with children must provide the following background information and covenants to the Church**, prior to assuming their prospective roles with the Church, and in any event as soon as possible after adoption and implementation of this Policy:

**A. EMPLOYEES**

1. A current FBI National Crime Information Center (NCIC) record;
2. A current Pennsylvania State Police report of criminal history information, or statement from the State Police that the central repository contains no such information;
3. A certification from the Department of Public Welfare as to whether the applicant is named in the central register as the perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse, indicated report of child abuse, founded report for school employee or indicated report for school employee; and
4. An executed Participation Covenant Statement in the form designated by the Church.

**B. VOLUNTEERS**

1. A current Pennsylvania State Police report of criminal history information, or statement from the State Police that the central repository contains no such information;
2. A certification from the Department of Public Welfare as to whether the applicant is named in the central register as the perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse, indicated

report of child abuse, founded report for school employee or indicated report for school employee; and

3. An executed Participation Covenant Statement in the form designated by the Church.

**V. PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

**Observed or suspected conduct amounting to Child Abuse** on Church grounds or while under the care, supervision, guidance or training of any person in connection with a Church-sponsored activity, camp, conference, retreat or program **should be reported as soon as possible, adhering as closely as is practicable to the following procedure:**

1. **Refer all reports of Child Abuse to the Church Pastor or to the SPRC Chair. If for any reason the report cannot immediately be made to the Pastor or SPRC Chair, it shall be made to any available SPRC member (see attached roster).**
2. Upon receiving a report of suspected Child Abuse, the Pastor, SPRC Chair or other SPRC member shall gather essential information in accordance with the approved “Report of Suspected Child Abuse” form.
3. Upon receiving a report of suspected child abuse, the Pastor, SPRC Chair or other SPRC member must **immediately report the matter to appropriate law enforcement authorities.**
4. Upon receiving a report of suspected child abuse, the Pastor, SPRC Chair or other SPRC member must **immediately make an oral report of the suspected Child Abuse to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (“DPW”) via the ChildLine hotline at (800) 932-0313.** Upon making the report to ChildLine, the Pastor, SPRC Chair or other SPRC member shall notify the victim/witness who made the original report that the matter has been reported to DPW.

5. Upon receiving a report of suspected child abuse, the Pastor, SPRC Chair or other SPRC member must also **immediately notify the United Methodist Church District Superintendent.**
  
6. Within 48 hours of making the initial oral report to ChildLine, the Pastor, SPRC Chair or other SPRC member must **make a written report on forms provided by the DPW (Report of Suspected Child Abuse) to the county children and youth agency** in the county where the suspected child abuse occurred. The Pastor, SPRC Chair or other SPRC member shall maintain records of all such reports made under this Policy.
  
7. Reports of Child Abuse made pursuant to this Policy, as well as any information obtained in the course of processing such a report, including written or photographs taken concerning alleged instances, shall remain confidential and in possession of the Pastor, SPRC Chair or other SPRC member, excepting disclosures made in accordance with this Policy, or as may otherwise be deemed necessary to secure the safety of the child victim.

### **PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT**

Salem United Methodist Church (“Church”) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children and youth who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the Church. The following policy statements and covenants reflect the Church's commitment to preserving a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter, and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

#### **I. POLICY STATEMENTS:**

1. All employees or volunteers have a **continuing obligation to inform Pastor of this Church if you ever are or ever have been adjudicated a “perpetrator” or convicted of perpetrating Child Abuse** (as herein defined) or any related offense, at any time and in any jurisdiction, **or if you are at any time charged with Child Abuse or a related offense**, in any jurisdiction.
2. Six Month Rule--All volunteers expected to have contact with children must have been members of or active participants in the Church for at least the immediately preceding six months.
3. Two Adult Rule--No employees and volunteers expected to have contact with children shall remain alone with a child or youth not their own for a prolonged period (more than a few minutes).
4. All employees and volunteers expected to have contact with children shall endeavor to attend available training or educational events, and remain informed of the Church’s Child Abuse Policies.
5. All employees and volunteers expected to have contact with children shall immediately report abusive or inappropriate behavior in accordance with this Policy.

#### **II. COVENANTS:**

1. Do you agree to inform the Pastor of this Church if you ever are or ever have been adjudicated a “perpetrator” or convicted of perpetrating Child Abuse (as herein defined) or any related offense, at

any time and in any jurisdiction, or if you are are at any time charged with Child Abuse or a related offense, in any jurisdiction? q Yes q No

2. Do you agree to abide by the "Six Month Rule"? q Yes q No
3. Do you agree to observe the "Two Adult Rule" at all times? Yes q Noq
4. Do you agree to participate in training and education events related to your volunteer assignment, and remain informed of Church policies regarding child abuse? q Yes q No
5. Do you agree to immediately report abusive or inappropriate behavior in accordance with this Policy? q Yes q No
6. Do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth? q Yes q No

I have read this **PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT**, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

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Print full name

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Signature of Applicant Date