

Johns Creek  
United Methodist  
Church  
Johns Creek, Georgia  
Safe Sanctuaries Policy

Approved by Trustees: 9/13/17

Approved by Church Council: 10/24/2017 (date)

### ***Statement of Covenant***

Johns Creek United Methodist Church (JCUMC from hence forth) believes that the spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults is imperative. We must do all that we can to nurture and protect our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This policy is intended to provide a guide for that protection, as well as the protection of our adult workers and church. This policy is enacted to insure that all the parents, members, volunteers, and staff of JCUMC have a clear understanding of what the policies and procedures are regarding the safety of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The leadership of JCUMC requests the cooperation of all in our church, as they must abide by the guidelines of this policy.

JCUMC classifies age groups in the following way:

- Children are defined as 0-fifth grade
- Youth are defined as sixth grade- twelfth grade
- Vulnerable Adults may be defined as persons age 18 or older who are mentally, physically, or psychologically challenged and are unable to make responsible legal decisions about their own welfare. These persons may also be elderly people defined as age 65 or older.

### ***Policy Standards***

Staff and volunteers that work in any areas of children, youth, and/or with vulnerable adults at JCUMC, including but not limited to the children's, youth, and music ministries of JCUMC, JCUMC Preschool and Kindergarten, Parent's Morning Out program, Preschool Summer Camps, and sports programs of JCUMC are required to adhere to these policies and standards.

In order to provide a safe environment for all persons on its premises, Johns Creek United Methodist Church requires that any outside organization or group that meets on the premises of Johns Creek United Methodist Church as a lessee, renter, tenant, or in any other relationship assent to all terms and conditions of the Safe Sanctuary Policy of Johns Creek United Methodist Church and abide by its terms and conditions concerning the protection and care of children and youth (18 years of age and under) and vulnerable adults.

The following provisions shall apply specifically to outside groups and may modify other provisions in this policy:

- Outside groups will be responsible for completing background checks at least as often as this Safe Sanctuary Policy requires on their own employees and volunteers who will be working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults and shall be required to certify compliance with this requirement.
- Outside groups will be responsible for training their own employees and volunteers on the terms of this Safe Sanctuary Policy and shall be required to certify compliance with this requirement.
- Outside groups will submit to periodic review and inspection of their implementation of this Policy.

- When the employees and volunteers of an outside organization receive allegations of abuse of vulnerable persons related in connection to the outside group's use of the church's facilities, the employee or volunteer will follow the reporting procedures outlined in this document and will report the allegation to the Ministry Directors, Supervisor, and/or Pastors immediately following reports to applicable authorities.

### ***Supervision of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Workers***

The church staff and volunteers who supervise children and youth and workers with vulnerable adults are charged with enforcing this policy. Any violation of these policies or persistent failure to follow this policy can result in immediate dismissal, disciplinary action or reassignment to another area of work at the discretion of the Church Council and/ or Staff Parish Relations Committee. Anyone who suspects this policy is not being enforced should bring it to the attention of the person who is deemed "person in charge" of the specific program or event. This person must take immediate action on this violation. All reports must be brought to the Senior Pastor and/or their designee immediately, within 24 hours.

### ***Vulnerable Adults***

While much of this policy addresses the need to protect children and youth, JCUMC recognizes that abuse of impaired and older adults is a major concern. Many older adults are also subject to financial abuse. We must be vigilant for signs of abuse in our adult membership and report any suspected abuse, following the process outline above. The local Department of Family and Child Services has a division with responsibility for supervising elder care.

### ***Supervision of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy***

The Senior Pastor will appoint the person or committee (staff or volunteer) with the responsibility of the oversight of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy. These policies govern all activities held by the church that involve children and youth under the age of 18, or any vulnerable adult.

These policies must be reviewed annually and re-approved by the Church Council and be presented at charge conference. These policies may be altered at any time with the approval of the Church Council and the Trustees.

### ***Classification of Workers***

JCUMC uses the following classifications of its workers:

- 1) **Primary Workers**- All paid staff and volunteers with an assigned responsibility shall be classified as primary workers and will be required to meet "primary worker" responsibilities. Primary workers have the primary responsibility for interaction with and greater access to children, youth, and vulnerable adults. A primary worker must be a minimum of 21 years of age. Examples are Sunday school teachers and youth counselors. Anyone in a supervisory role is considered a primary worker.
- 2) **Secondary workers**- Secondary workers are paid staff and volunteers who have occasional contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. These persons work under the supervision of a primary worker. A secondary worker must be a minimum of

18 years of age. Examples are parents helping with a class or program such as VBS or helpers in Sunday School.

### ***Guidelines for Volunteers***

All volunteer workers must be at least 18 years of age. All volunteers must be at least five years older than the children or youth with whom they are working. Youth under the age of 18 may volunteer with the Children's Ministries activities and be counted as a secondary worker, provided they are paired with a primary worker who meets the standards above. Youth are not permitted to be solely in charge of a group.

Any person wishing to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must have been a member of the church or have been a steady visitor for a minimum of six months before being allowed to volunteer. The term visitor may be defined as someone who has consistently attended worship or a parent of a child in the preschool or Parent's Morning Out program who has volunteered on a regular basis. This policy can be waived only by the Senior Pastor for preschool teachers and recreation volunteers provided they meet all requirements outlined in this policy and have a current background check completed by JCUMC.

### ***Two Worker Rule***

There must be both one **primary worker** and one secondary worker or two **primary workers** in the room when there is a child, youth, or vulnerable adult present. This rule is for the protection of the students as well as the adults. Relatives are permitted to volunteer together (for example: siblings, parent/child). A married couple may volunteer with the same group provided a third adult, who is Safe Sanctuary trained, is present. This rule is for onsite and offsite activities and includes but is not limited to activities hosted in homes of youth and youth volunteers.

### ***Floater***

This rule allows for only one **primary worker** to be in a classroom when you have another **primary worker** floating the hall regularly. When using this rule, the classroom door must remain open at all times. This should only be done if two workers are not available.

### ***Background Checks***

Anyone working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults of JCUMC must undergo a national criminal background check. The report must show no serious offenses or they will not be allowed to become a worker. Workers will not be allowed to chaperone an event off of church grounds until the background check has been completed and the report has been cleared by the Senior Pastor and/or his/her designee. A **primary worker** awaiting results may participate with onsite activities as long as they are supervised by another **primary worker**. A new background check shall be done at least every 2 years. For persons under the age of 18, a background check will not be completed but they will be asked to provide a list of references to be contacted.

### ***Annual Orientation***

All new **primary workers** must attend a Safe Sanctuaries orientation. The church will provide an orientation and refresher course that will provide information on child, youth, and vulnerable adults/elder abuse and explain any changes made to the Safe Sanctuaries policy. This may or may not be held in conjunction with the First Aid and CPR Training. All **primary workers** must take a refresher course every two years. The refresher course is for persons who have already been trained.

### ***First Aid and CPR***

Since the safety of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults is a top priority, every **primary worker** shall be trained in both First Aid and CPR. All paid nursery workers should be certified in CPR. The church will hold training classes and keep a record to know who has completed the training. This provision will be fully implemented by June 30, 2022. Until that date, First Aid and CPR training will not be required.

### ***Standards to be applied to diapering or restroom activity:***

Procedure for all workers with children in diapers:

- Make sure another adult is in the room when a diaper is being changed.
- Diapering should occur in a visible area.
- JCUMC Preschool and Parents Morning Out Diapering Policy:
  - o Put on gloves. Clean gloves must be worn for each child while changing the diaper. Change disposable paper on changing mat for each child.
  - o Gloves are taken off as soon as the child's bottom is clean and before putting on the clean diaper.
  - o Dirty diapers and gloves must be put into a plastic garbage bag and disposed of properly.
  - o Diaper and re-dress the child.
  - o Wash hands with soap and water. Roll clean paper onto changing mat.

Procedure for all workers with preschool children using restrooms:

- If a toilet adjoins the room in use, teachers must supervise and the door must remain open, even if just a little.
- If there has been a potty "accident" and a worker needs to assist a child (changing, clothes, clean up, etc.), two adults must be present and a parent may be notified if further cleaning is necessary.

Procedures for all workers with elementary age children:

- Tell another adult you will be taking children to the restroom
- Check the restroom first before sending children to the restroom.
- Take more than one at a time, allowing children to be as independent as possible.
- It is recommended that a female escort girls and boys and males only escort boys.

- Inform other adult when you have returned.

### ***Classroom Windows***

All classrooms will have at least one window in the door. The window must **NOT** be covered at any time with decorations, etc. When there is not a window or if the window in the door is frosted or tinted, the door must remain open.

### ***Open Door Counseling***

Any one-on-one counseling session (on or off site) with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult will be done with the door open or in a room where there is a window in the door. Depending on the age of the child, a half door may be used to prevent the child from leaving the room. If at all possible, it should be done when another adult is nearby but not necessarily within hearing distance.

### ***Transportation***

Transportation to and from activities held at the church is not the church's responsibility. Church approved drivers may provide transportation to and from activities held away from the church. Volunteers must pass a motor vehicle background check to be considered a church approved driver. Those with more than three points on their license within a five year period will not be allowed to transport children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Persons with a known history of alcohol/substance abuse or DUI/DWI convictions as reported in a background check shall not be allowed to transport children, youth or vulnerable adults. Church approved drivers must have a valid driver's license and an insurance card on file in the church office. Church approved drivers are covered under church insurance only when driving church vehicles (the bus and the van) and vehicles rented for activities (example: youth missions). If there is only one vehicle, there must be two adults present or at least more than one child, youth, or vulnerable adult in the vehicle with the adult. When there is an offsite trip, there must be at least one adult worker of each gender represented. Exceptions to the gender rule apply when it is a single gender event (example girl's only ice cream trip) but there must still be two adults present. Youth will not be allowed to drive other youth or children or themselves to and from offsite youth activities without express written permission from a parent/guardian and prior arrangements made with the youth director.

### ***Sleeping Arrangements***

On church sponsored overnight trips, where motel/hotel type rooms are used, all youth and children should be assigned their own same sex rooms and adults will be assigned their own same sex rooms. The adult rooms should be in between the youth/children rooms if at all possible. The adults should check on the youth/ children at random times throughout the night.

- When staying in host homes, youth/children should be assigned to a group with same sex youth/children. People hosting the children/youth should have preferably been through Safe Sanctuaries training, or a similar program/training, and/ or had a background check.

- When staying at camps and separating youth from adults is not an option, there must be same sex cabins and 2 leaders of the same sex must be present. No adult should be alone in a cabin with children/youth.
- When staying at a church, school, or other facility, youth/children should be divided into same sex rooms. If possible, adults should stay in same sex rooms and separate from youth. If not, follow the camp/cabins rule.
- With regard to sexual orientation, situations will be handled on a case by case basis.

### ***Parent and Family Education and Communication***

The approval of this policy will be communicated to the church at large with special emphasis on communicating to all parents of our children and youth. Copies of this policy will be available for all parents and other interested parties. A copy of the policy will be given to all new members. Any revisions to the policy must be communicated to the congregation as soon as possible.

From time to time educational events will be made available for parents and other interested parties. These events will provide information on the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, child abuse, and any other information that will enhance parenting skills.

Parents will be provided with advance notice of all regularly scheduled youth and children's activities. Written permission will be required for participation in activities that are not on church grounds.

### ***Social Media, Websites, Photos, and Emails***

Email/social media from adults sent to youth and children should be limited to information related to children and youth ministries. Email addresses/social media pages of youth and children should be protected and not given out. Any photos on the church website, social media sites, posted in classrooms, or posted on bulletin boards should not identify individuals. If allergy signs are posted, they should not show names to ensure an individual's privacy. Written permission must be received from parents before any photo of children or youth is posted on a church sponsored website, social media, in classrooms, or on bulletin boards. The church will include a photo release on its permission forms for events and activities.

### ***Reporting Accidents, Incidents, and Suspected Abuse***

**Accidents** – when an unintentional act occurs and a child/youth/vulnerable adult is hurt:

- When an accident occurs, resulting in an injury, administer first aid, or seek medical attention. Within 24 hours, the observer is to complete an *Accident Report Form*, recording details including, the injured party's name, names of others who witnessed accident or applied first aid, time and place accident occurred and care given.
- Completed form is to be given to area ministry director, who gives it to the church administrator.

**Incident** – When an action is observed that does not require reporting to Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), but does require attention:

- If the incident observed does not rise to the level of suspected abuse, an *Incident Report Form* should be completed and given to Ministry Directors, Supervisor, and/or Pastors.

- The staff person over the area where an incident was observed, should contact the one whose behavior was inappropriate, to discuss alternative behaviors, or to offer support or training.
- The staff person should indicate on the bottom of the *Incident Report Form* how the situation was resolved.
- If inappropriate behavior is repeated, further action shall be taken.

**Suspected Abuse** – When one sees, has been told of, or suspects an incident of abuse or neglect of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult:

The following is a definition of child abuse supplied by The Georgia Department of Family and Child Services:

“What is considered child abuse and neglect? Physical abuse is injury to a child under the age of 18, by a parent or caretaker, which results in bruises, fractures, burns, cuts, or internal injuries. Neglect is the failure of the parent or caretaker to see that the child is adequately supervised, fed, clothed, housed, or provided medical care. Sexual abuse occurs when a parent or other adult uses a child under age 18 for sexual stimulation.”

- **When a JCUMC Staff Member or Volunteer Suspects Child/ Youth/Vulnerable Adult Abuse:**

- o Any JCUMC paid Staff Worker or volunteer (the Reporter) who suspects child abuse should immediately report suspicions to their Ministry Director or designee.
- o The Reporter should complete a *Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse Form*
- o The Ministry Director will contact his/her supervisor to discuss the appropriateness of a referral to Protective Services. The Senior Pastor will be notified.
- o If a referral is to be made, the Senior Pastor will contact the District Superintendent and Insurance Company.
- o The Reporter, with support from Ministry Director or his/her supervisor will call the appropriate Child Protective Service office to report the suspected abuse. In emergency situations staff should call 911 for assistance. The report should be made to the child’s county of residence or to the county where the suspected abuse took place:

Fulton County	404-699-4399
DeKalb County	404-370-5066
Gwinnett County	770-995-2122
Cobb County	770-528-5015
Forsyth County	770-781-6700

- o If staff observes an incident of concern which does not rise to the level of suspected abuse, but does warrant further investigation by the Ministry Director, (i.e. JCUMC staff observing parent hitting own child) an *Incident Report Form* should be completed.
- o The family shall receive immediate ministerial support from JCUMC by either the Senior Pastor or an Associate Pastor. Support will also be provided for the abuser and the abuser’s family if needed.



- **When a member or visitor (The Reporter) suspects child abuse at JCUMC by a paid or volunteer staff:**
  - Immediate action and contact with church staff supervisor is recommended.
  - The paid staff member or volunteer who is contacted by a member/visitor reporter should immediately refer the reporter to the appropriate Ministry Director over the staff member in question. If that Director is not available, the reporter should be directed to that Director's Supervisor or to one of the Pastors. In case of emergency, staff should call 911 for assistance.
  - The Reporter should complete the *Report of Suspected of Child Abuse Form* and if the incident occurred on JCUMC property, an *Incident Report Form* should also be completed.
  - The Senior Pastor or Staff Parish Relations Committee Chairperson should be notified before a call is placed to protective services.
  - With the support of staff, the Reporter will telephone the Protective Service office in the county of the individual's residence to report the suspected abuse or to the county in which the suspected abuse took place.
  - If the incident observed does not rise to the level of suspected abuse, an *Incident Report Form* should be completed. Ministry Directors, Supervisors and/or Pastors should submit a written report describing how the situation was addressed and resolved.
  - Any staff member (paid or volunteer) who is implicated on a *Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse* or an *Incident Report Form* should be removed from direct involvement with program participant immediately after the report is made until the situation is adequately investigated and resolved.
  - The victim and victim's family shall receive immediate ministry support from JCUMC if needed.
  
- **Church plan when suspected abuse is reported**
  - Information should be shared with other staff persons on a need-to-know basis.
  - Designated person contacts police, if appropriate, the District Superintendent, and the Insurance Company.
  - Only the Senior Pastor or designated spokesperson should speak to media. Statement to media shall be coordinated through District and Conference communication officials consistent with JCUMC's media and press contact policy.