



Child Protection Policy 2021

8899 Sudley Road, Manassas, VA 20110
stthomasumc.org | 703-368-5161

Senior Pastor: Rev. Abi Foerster
Associate Pastor: Rev. Arum Kim
Director of Children's Ministries: Kristi Swanson
Director of Sunbeam Children's Center: Veronica McGuin

Our Mission:

We exist to reach, nourish, and serve the community
so all may experience healing and new life in Jesus Christ.

Safe Sanctuary Training Renewal Due: _____

Table of Contents

- I. PURPOSE 3
- II. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION 3
- III. VIRGINIA’S CHILD ABUSE LAWS..... 4
- IV. DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE..... 5
 - A. DEFINITION5
 - B. TYPES OF ABUSE5
- V. TYPES OF VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES..... 6
 - A. SHORT TERM VOLUNTEER.....6
 - B. LONG TERM VOLUNTEER6
 - C. EMPLOYEE7
- VI. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUMC 7
 - A. ST. THOMAS UMC7
 - B. EMPLOYEES.....7
 - C. VOLUNTEERS IN CHILDREN AND STUDENT MINISTRY AREAS8
 - D. COMMUNITY GROUPS USING STUMC FACILITIES8
- VII. WAYS WE PROTECT OUR CHILDREN & STUDENTS 8
 - A. SIX-MONTH RULE8
 - B. WORKER SCREENING8
 - C. CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING9
 - D. ALLERGIES.....9
 - E. ADULT SUPERVISION POLICIES.....9
 - F. CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE POLICY.....11
 - G. CONSEQUENCES FOR POLICY VIOLATIONS12
- VIII. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE..... 12
- IX. POLICY REVIEW 14
- X. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION 14
- XI. APPENDIX A 15
- XII. APPENDIX B..... 17

I. Purpose

The goal of St. Thomas United Methodist Church (STUMC) children and youth ministries is to provide, with God's help, a solid foundation of Biblical truth that will instill in our young people a lifetime of respect and love for Christ and the Church. This written policy helps ensure STUMC provides a safe learning environment, free from any neglect or abuse to children, infants through 18 years of age, in our church. The community of faith at STUMC models the love of God to and for children in many ways including the following:

- a. Taking time to listen to children and to one another;
- b. Provide a safe, nurturing and joyful environment for the children who are entrusted to our care;
- c. Modeling honesty, compassion and respect for one another;
- d. Modeling ways in which conflicts can be resolved peacefully; and,
- e. Modeling healthy, positive behaviors.

As a result, our hope is that parents can be confident that STUMC's facilities and programs will do the following:

- f. Nurture their children and students in a caring and secure environment;
- g. Children and students can see God's loving guidance and care personified, and finally,
- h. The adults working in children and student ministries are protected from any situation that might lead to false accusations of misconduct.

The guidelines reflected in this policy apply to both paid staff and volunteers of STUMC and community-sponsored groups involving children or youth who use our facilities. This includes the Sunbeam Children's Center, which is a vital ministry of STUMC; however, it is important to note that this program is ultimately governed by protocols and procedures mandated to them by state licensing departments.

II. Biblical Foundation

STUMC seeks to express God's love of children as taught by Jesus and provide for their personal wholeness, growth, and protection. The Bible is foundational to the understanding upon which our policies, procedures, and ministries must stand.

"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD..." (Psalm 127:3a)

¹³ One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. ¹⁵ I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." ¹⁶ Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16)

Jesus valued children for their faith and openness, but also highlighted their vulnerability. Because this vulnerability puts children at risk, our response to this Biblical mandate is to ensure that we maintain a safe, secure, and loving place where

caregivers, teachers, and leaders, in the solemn knowledge of their responsibility, minister appropriately to the needs of the children and students. We look to emulate Christ's love by surrounding the children and students of our church with such security and care that they see the reflection of his arms around them. Our responsibility is to provide this environment so that our children may grow up and grow nearer to God while they do.

III. Virginia's Child Abuse Laws

Under Virginia law, Section 63.2-100, an abused or neglected child is defined as any child less than 18 years of age: 1. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care creates or inflicts, threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon such child a physical or mental injury other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions. 2. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care neglects or refuses to provide care necessary for his health. However, no child who in good faith is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination shall for that reason alone be considered to be an abused or neglected child. 3. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care abandons such child. 4. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care commits or allows to be committed any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law. 5. Who is without parental care or guardianship caused by the unreasonable absence or the mental or physical incapacity of the child's parent, guardian, legal custodian or other personal standing in loco parentis; or 6. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care creates a substantial risk of physical or mental injury by knowingly leaving the child alone in the same dwelling, including an apartment as defined in 55-79.2, with a person to whom the child is not related by blood or marriage and who the parent or other person responsible for his care knows has been convicted of an offense against a minor for which registration is required as a violent sexual offender pursuant to 9.1-902.

Section 63.2-1509 in Virginia law states that the following persons who, in their professional or official capacity, have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, shall report the matter immediately to the local department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred or to the Department's toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline: 1. Any person licensed to practice medicine or any of the healing arts, 2. Any hospital resident or intern, and any person employed in the nursing profession, 3. Any person employed as a social worker, 4. Any probation officer, 5. **Any teacher or other person employed in a public or private school, kindergarten, or nursery school**, 6. Any person providing full-time or part-time child care for pay on a regularly planned basis, 7. Any mental health professional, 8. Any law-enforcement officer, 9. Any mediator eligible to receive court referrals pursuant to 8.01-576.8, 10. Any professional staff person, not previously enumerated, employed by a private or state-operated hospital, institution, or facility to which children have been committed or where children have been placed for care and treatment, 11. **Any person associated with or employed by any private organization responsible for the care, custody, or control of children**, 12. Any person who is designated a court-appointed special advocate pursuant to Article 5 (9.1-151 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, 13. Any person, over the age of eighteen years, who has received training approved by the Department of Social Services for the purpose of recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect and, 14. Any person employed by a local department as defined in 63.2-100 who determines eligibility for public assistance.

Any person who makes a report or provides records or information or who testifies in any judicial proceeding arising from such report, records, or information shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability or administrative penalty or sanction on account of such report, records, information, or testimony, unless such person acted in bad faith or with

malicious purpose.

In Manassas, if you have a concern that a child is being abused or neglected, you may call the Department of Social Services at 703-361-8277 during office hours or the State Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline at 800-552-7096 to report your concerns twenty-four hours a day.

IV. Definitions of Child Abuse

A. Definition

In general, child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) that is not accidental and that harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health welfare. The legal definition of child abuse is contained in Virginia's Child Abuse Laws as noted in the previous section.

B. Types of Abuse

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is defined as the use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment. This type of force is not an accident. It can include, but is not limited to:

- Assault (hitting, beating, shoving, etc.)
- Shaking or slapping
- Burning or scalding
- Kicking or choking

2. Psychological (Mental or Emotional Abuse)

Psychological abuse is characterized by a person subjecting, or exposing, another person to behavior that may result in psychological trauma. It does not always involve injuries we can see. It can include, but is not limited to:

- Close confinement, such as being shut in a closet
- Inadequate nurture or the withholding of affection
- Excessive punishment or extreme discipline
- Knowingly permitting such behavior as drug or alcohol abuse

3. Neglect

Neglect is not hearing or addressing (i.e. ignoring) a child's basic needs for health, welfare, or safety that results in harm to the child. It can include, but is not limited to, any of the following acts of negligence or maltreatment:

- Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing
- Abandonment (i.e. a toddler left alone in a vehicle)

- Refusal to seek treatment for illness
 - Inadequate supervision
 - Health hazards in the home, school, or church
 - Ignoring a child's needs for contact, affirmation, stimulation, and nurture
 - The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.
4. **Sexual Abuse**
Sexual abuse involves an act of forcing undesired sexual behavior by one person upon another. When that force is immediate, of short duration, or infrequent, it is called sexual assault. It can include, but it not limited to, any of the following exploitive behaviors:
- Inappropriate verbal stimulation
 - Fondling, incest, rape, sodomy
 - Exposing a child to pornography or adult sexual activity.
5. **Failure to Thrive**
A syndrome of infancy or early childhood, which is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.
6. **Bizarre Discipline**
Any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior.

V. Types of Volunteers and Employees

A. Short Term Volunteer

1. Driver for children/youth events
2. Short term events children/youth volunteer
3. Substitute Sunday School teacher
4. Vacation Bible School or Summer Camp volunteer

B. Long Term Volunteer

1. Nursery Volunteer
2. Children's Church Leaders
3. Choir Leader

4. Sunday School Teacher or Small Group Leader
5. Youth Group Coach or Activity Leader
6. Kids Care 2 Leader
7. Overnight (on- or off-site) volunteer for children/youth events

C. Employee

1. Church Staff
2. SCC Staff
3. Paid Nursery & Childcare Workers
4. Music Interns
5. Summer Camp Staff

VI. Responsibilities of STUMC

A. St. Thomas UMC

As a provider of childcare and Christian education, STUMC is responsible for the safety and well-being of the children and students in its care. We are responsible both to the parents of the children and/or students and to the legal authorities for ensuring that our facilities meet all standards of physical and emotional safety and due care.

As an employer of childcare workers and as a group of caring volunteers, we are also responsible for ensuring that our staff, paid workers, and volunteers are protected from being in a situation where they may be falsely accused of inappropriate behavior toward any child or student in our care. As a body of followers of Jesus Christ, we are responsible for providing love, care, and support that reflects God's own; for Christian fellowship and education, and for loving outreach to all attendees – from oldest to youngest – of our worship services, activities, and programs.

Within our Christian mission, our policies are designed to provide protection to both the children/students and the workers by ensuring that no worker is ever placed into a position where they are alone with the children and/or student and that no worker uses violent or inappropriate discipline methods. With appropriate assistance and witnesses in place, no opportunity should ever arise for any worker to commit any act of abuse against our children and students.

B. Employees

All employees shall be trained in our policies and procedures. Those members of staff and officers of the church constituting the local response team (see Section VIII, Reporting Child Abuse) or directly supervising paid childcare workers shall attend church training in child protection; shall be cognizant of their responsibilities in the event of an allegation of child abuse; and shall be fully trained in the conduct of their related duties. All employees must pass background checks and interviews, attend child protection training, and be prepared to document any incidents that may indicate the presence of abuse.

They shall be required to read, understand, acknowledge, and sign this policy before beginning their duties at STUMC. They are responsible for implementing and abiding by our written policies on child protection and classroom discipline.

C. Volunteers in Children and Student Ministry Areas

Volunteers in children and student ministry areas are responsible for knowing these policies before being permitted to work with the children or students. They must pass background checks and attend a "Safe Sanctuary" course. We acknowledge that our volunteers are not childcare professionals and are not trained to recognize signs of abuse; however, our volunteers are responsible for remaining aware that the potential for abuse exists and that they are part of our efforts at prevention. They are responsible for abiding by our written policies on child protection and classroom discipline. Our volunteers are asked to prayerfully consider their calling to and behavior in the children and student ministry areas before participating in the work, so that no inappropriate behavior arises on their parts.

D. Community Groups Using STUMC Facilities

Leaders/representatives of community groups desiring to use our facilities must read, acknowledge, and sign our Child Protection Policy before being permitted to use facilities belonging to STUMC. While using STUMC facilities, community groups must abide by the policies set forth in this document. All such groups will receive a copy of this document and shall file their completed acknowledgment form (Form A) with their initial application to the Trustees of STUMC.

VII. Ways We Protect Our Children & Students

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within STUMC, we have implemented several abuse prevention measures. These measures include screening of paid and volunteer workers for past child abuse convictions or expungements, provision for regular training on child abuse issues to paid and volunteer staff members, use of the two leader rule, standards of appropriate classroom discipline and open classrooms. The full list of protection measures are as follows:

A. Six-Month Rule

STUMC requires that any volunteer church workers in children or student programs be members of the church for at least six months or be actively involved in the church for six months before beginning responsibilities. We make every effort to place new workers with longtime, experienced leadership volunteers. Paid workers, while not required to be members of STUMC, will always be supervised by senior staff members.

B. Worker Screening

1. Employees

Before beginning employment, employees will be asked to sign Form A containing a statement that they have never been convicted of an offense involving child abuse, neglect, moral turpitude, or any other offense defined in Virginia Code Section 63.2-1719, and that they have not been the subject of a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect. Anyone refusing to sign Form A will not be permitted to work with the children or students. In addition, applicants for paid staff positions will undergo a criminal background check, and will not be hired if they have been convicted of an offense involving child abuse, neglect, moral turpitude, or any other offense defined in Virginia

Code Section 63.2-1719, or if they have been the subject of a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect.

2. Volunteers

In order to ensure that we have the right people working in any area of the life of the church, all volunteers are asked to prayerfully consider their calling toward a given ministry before committing to such service. Before accepting their service, the church staff and church members also pray that they are the right people to do the work. In this way, we are assured that most of the volunteers working in children and student programs feel the LORD calling them to such a ministry and are prepared for and suited to the work. Nonetheless, all volunteer workers in programs that involve children and students shall read and sign Form A, complete a criminal background check, and comply with the Child Protection Policy as set forth by STUMC. If an individual proposed for a position working with children or students is a known sexual or violent offender, the matter shall be brought to the pastor and the individual will not be assigned to work with children or students.

C. Child Protection Training

Before beginning their paid or volunteer service, workers with children and students will be required to read the church's Child Protection Policy and sign Form A indicating that they have read and understand the policy and agree to abide by it. Persons will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and the form signed. Periodically the church will offer training sessions related to the Child Protection Policy (no less than once a year and more frequently as needed). It is the expectation that all short-term volunteers, long-term volunteers, and employees directly supervising children will attend at least one training session in the first year of service, preferably before beginning their duties, and they must repeat the training every three years or whenever the policy has substantive changes. Additionally, the SPRC, Sunbeam Children's Center Board, and members of the Board of Trustees will also be required to attend.

D. Allergies

STUMC recognizes the serious health risks peanuts and other food allergens pose to those affected by them. Through proper hand washing, education, communication, and attention to labeled ingredients, we strive to minimize the risk of exposure to food allergens by those participating in church sponsored programs and activities. However, STUMC makes no claim to being a peanut or other food allergy free facility.

E. Adult Supervision Policies

1. Two Leader Rule

There will be adequate supervision to oversee each group of children and youth. Screened adults will be assigned in teams of two or more for all children or youth activities, including childcare, and transportation to off-site events. Ideally, workers in our children and student programs shall not be alone with children at any time, for the protection of both the children/students and the workers. If any group stays overnight at the church, two or more leaders must be present and must include at least one male and one female not related by marriage, if the group is mixed in gender. Community groups of children or youth that meet at the church must have two or more adults present. More specifically, we will accomplish this by implementing the following rules:

- a) Teachers and leaders will be assigned in teams of two or more per classroom and for all church activities involving children and students. This is required for all church sponsored and community groups of children or students who use our church facility.
- b) Volunteers in children and student programs must be at least five years older than the oldest participant in the program or activity. Nursery volunteers must be sixteen years of age or older.
- c) In the event that a husband and wife serve in leadership together, a third non-family member will be present.
- d) In the event that it is not possible to have at least two adult workers in a room or defined area, the church will ensure one adult volunteer or staff can serve as “security personnel” by roving the halls between groups to closely monitor any classroom where only one adult is present.
- e) Additionally, for those times when the Two Leader Rule cannot be supported, supervision policies and procedures require at least three non-related individuals (at least one being an adult) to be present at every function, and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children or youth.
- f) All programs falling under the Sunbeam Children's Center, including but not limited to the Day Care and Preschool will abide by Virginia licensing regulations in respect to the child-adult ratios.

2. Supervision of Mixed Gender Groups

When a group includes both boys and girls and if the group stays overnight at the church or leaves the church premises, both male and female leaders must be present.

3. Off-site Transportation Policy

The provisions of this Child Protection Policy guide all field trips and off-site transportation under the auspices of STUMC. All field trips will be supervised by at least the minimum number of two adults in the vehicle as required by our policies. In addition, a signed parental consent form with an authorization for emergency medical care is required for all such trips. All drivers of automobiles transporting children or students shall be at least twenty-five years of age, covered by liability insurance, and must sign both a release allowing STUMC to run a DMV driving record check and Form A.

4. Scouting Groups

These organizations meeting at STUMC will abide by their national organization policies, in addition to this policy.

5. New Groups

Any new groups that wish to meet at STUMC will abide by these procedures unless they meet and coordinate with the STUMC Child Protection Task Force to evaluate and approve special considerations.

6. **Open Classroom Policy:**

Classrooms or childcare rooms may be visited, at any time, without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers. Staff, parents, or volunteers visiting classrooms in which Sunday School, Bible study, a small group gathering, or a rehearsal that is in progress are only requested to avoid causing disruption to the students/participants. There are also glass windows in the doors to permit observation. Staff ministry leaders will conduct random periodic observations and inspections of classrooms and meeting areas while meetings are in process.

F. Classroom Discipline Policy

The philosophy underlying classroom discipline at STUMC is that it is an opportunity to teach children and students the importance of self-respect and respect for others. Paul instructed that assemblies of Christ's church ought to be orderly and edifying (1 Cor. 14:26-33). Therefore, in our church's family, disruptive behavior will not be permitted in our classrooms, nor will any child or student be treated with disrespect or undue harshness when requiring correction. The following guidelines will govern the disciplining of children and students in our classrooms:

1. If a child/student is misbehaving, the adult will tell the child/student (in age appropriate terms) specifically what is not acceptable and indicate the expected behavior. Example: "We do not throw the blocks; we use the blocks for building." This is called identification.
2. If identifying the misbehavior does not work, the child/ student will be guided to another activity. This is called redirection.
3. If, after redirection, inappropriate behavior continues, the child or student will be placed at a table to work alone so that he/she is not affecting the other students. This is called separation.
4. If the disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be taken to the Director of Children's Ministry or the Director of Student Ministries and left in their care. This is called removal. If removal becomes necessary, the parents will be informed of the situation and participate in a resolutionary discussion with a Ministry Director and/or Pastor the same day of the disruption. In the event that the two adult rule cannot be maintained for both the child exhibiting disruptive behavior and the other children under the care of the ministry, parents may be contacted to immediately remove the child.
5. The leaders of off campus ministry involving children and students shall abide by this Child Protection Policy and shall sign applicable parts of Form A.
6. At no time will physical punishment, verbal abuse, ridicule, or excessively harsh verbal reprimand be used with children or students in our care.

G. Consequences For Policy Violations

If any action is observed, not constituting abuse, but in violation of this Child Protection Policy, the following consequences will result. The choice of consequences will reflect the severity of the offense and whether such action is a repeated offense. A volunteer acting in such a manner may be:

1. Taken aside by the volunteer or staff member in leadership and reminded of the disciplinary and child protection policies.
2. Approached by the pastor and reminded of the disciplinary and child protection policies.
3. Removed from his/her position with the children or student ministries and barred from participating in such ministries until he/she attends a Child Protection training session.
4. Permanently barred from contact with children or student ministries.
5. A paid employee observed in the same actions will be addressed by STUMC Personnel Policy.

VIII. Reporting Child Abuse

There are two possible situations requiring immediate action on the part of STUMC, its members, staff, and volunteers. If there would be allegations of child abuse at STUMC, or if a child coming to STUMC exhibits signs of abuse that have occurred away from STUMC setting, the procedures below shall be followed.

Due to the serious sensitive nature of such a crisis, and the potential harmful effects (both to the child or student and the accused) of false accusations and unrestrained gossip, THE STRICTEST CONFIDENTIALITY will be observed throughout the reporting process. In order to minimize confusion and talk, anyone associated with STUMC children or student programs who observes or has reason to suspect abuse should report these observations directly to the head of the relevant program as follows:

- Nursery: Director of Children's Ministries
- Sunbeam Children's Center: Director of Sunbeam Children's Center or Assistant Director of Sunbeam Children's Center
- All Other Children's Programs: Director of Children's Ministries
- All Student Programs: Associate Pastor / Director of Student Ministries

The head of the relevant program noted above is then responsible for ensuring that the Senior Pastor is informed of the allegations and that the procedures laid out below are set in motion.

Please Note that:

- If the supervisor or head of program is not available or
- If the supervisor or head of program is the accused

The observer is then responsible for directly contacting the Senior Pastor immediately. If the Senior Pastor is the accused,

the chair of the Staff-Pastor Parish Committee should be contacted instead. In the event the Senior Pastor is not available, then the head of the relevant program may contact the Associate Pastor instead. Specific procedures for reporting suspected child abuse follow, keeping in mind that confidentiality for both the victim and accused are to be strictly observed at all times:

2. Treat any allegation of child abuse seriously; do not ignore the issue in the hope that it will go away. Any individual observing acts of abuse occurring at STUMC is required by law to report this. Any individual associated with STUMC's child and student programs is required by law to report suspected abuse if they observe in any child/student signs of abuse having occurred. Policy training sessions will include definitions of abusive acts and recognition of classic signs of abuse.
3. The individual reporting the abuse shall document in writing by completing a confidential incident report form and the pastor/program head shall document all procedures observed in handling the allegation.
4. The appropriate individual (primarily the Senior Pastor) will perform necessary notification as follows:
 - a. Notify the Virginia Department of Social Services: 800-552-7096, and/or the local police department of the allegation, as required by law.
 - b. Notify the parents of the alleged victim, and the parents of the alleged perpetrator, if a minor.
 - c. Notify the church's insurance company, particularly in the case of abuse allegedly occurring at STUMC.
 - d. Notify the chair of the SPRC in cases of paid employees.
 - e. Call the Alexandria District Superintendent immediately if the allegation of abuse has occurred at STUMC or has involved a staff person (on or off site). In accordance with the Virginia Annual Conference Policy on misconduct, the District Superintendent will then contact the Conference Response Team who will send a representative to STUMC as quickly as possible, preferably within twenty-four hours, to work with the Local Church Response Team.
 - f. There will be a Local Church Response Team responsible for managing the ongoing response to the situation by STUMC. This team shall be comprised of the Senior Pastor who will chair the team, plus a representative from each of the following, to be designated by the chairperson of the respective committees: Board of Trustees, Church Council, and Staff Parish Relations. If one of the members of the team is the accused, an alternate will be selected to replace the individual involved. Any allegations of child abuse must be reported immediately to the Local Church Response Team. The Pastor and program head shall pray for all persons affected by the allegation, and for an atmosphere of healing in the church.
5. Individuals involved in reporting or the Local Church Response Team should NOT confront the accused with the allegation. However, if the accused has assigned duties within the life of the church, that person must temporarily be relieved of his/her duties until the investigation is concluded.
6. The Senior Pastor should extend whatever care and resources are necessary, but under no circumstances should the pastor or any church leader or member investigate the allegation. In providing care to the alleged victim and the accused, and their families, the pastor or church leader should under no circumstances be drawn into a discussion of truth or falsity of the allegation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or

refuting the allegation.

7. It is appropriate to show care, comfort, and reassurance for the alleged victim. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received.
8. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused.

IX. Policy Review

The Child Protection Policy of STUMC shall be reviewed bi-annually by the STUMC Child Protection Task Force (defined as a representative from each of the following groups: Board of Trustees, SPRC, and the Children's and Youth Councils) and their findings shall be reported to Church Council. If any additions or modifications to this policy are required, the Child Protection Task Force will draft any proposed amendments for adoption and bring their recommendations to the Trustees by March, who will then vote on them. The Trustees will then bring the bi-annual findings of the Task Force and their proposed amendments for final approval by the Church Council no later than their May meeting to ensure the integrity of the policy and procedures, and adequate time for training and implementation by volunteers and staff prior to VBS, summer camps, and the new school year.

X. Policy Implementation

All programs of the church involving children or students will implement these policies. This policy does not take the place of or invalidate policies concerning additional physical safety procedures (fire safety and evacuation policy, playground safety policy, minimum adult supervision-to-student ratios policy, nursery cleaning/sterilizing policy, etc.) used in our children and student programs.

This policy is in effect immediately upon approval by the Church Council. All staff, paid childcare, or student program workers, and volunteers in the children or student programs, and all groups meeting in the church facilities will receive training, be given a copy of this policy and required to sign the policy Form A certifying that you have read and understood the policy and have received training.

We will review the records of each employee and volunteer annually by March. Findings will be reported to either the STUMC Child Protection Task Force or directly to the Trustees. Record reviews will be conducted by the following ministry leaders to ensure this policy is consistently enforced:

- a. Sunbeam Children's Center Director – SCC employees
- b. Finance Director – Church employees
- c. Administrative Director – Volunteers

STUMC will maintain confidential records of staff and employees for one year beyond the date of termination. These records will be kept in a safe place that is inaccessible to the rest of the organization.

XI. Appendix A

Form A: Part 1

Acknowledgment and Release Form (Child Protection Policy)

Initials		Stipulation
_____		I hereby certify that I have read and understand the Child Protection Policy set forth by St. Thomas United Methodist Church (STUMC) and agree to abide by the policy.
Yes		
_____		I hereby certify that I have not been convicted of an offense involving child abuse or neglect, moral turpitude or any other offense defined in Virginia Code Section 63.2-1719.
Yes	N/A	
_____		I hereby certify that I have not been the subject of a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect. I give consent for STUMC to run a personal background check and/or criminal history report for the confirmation of this information.
Yes	N/A	
_____		I also give consent for STUMC to run a personal DMV driving record check if I will be transporting minors in a vehicle. (Please include your driver's license number below)
Yes	N/A	

Printed Name: _____

Driver's License State and #: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Present Church Member Yes ð No I have actively attended since _____

Area of Ministry: _____

Form A: Part 2

Reference Form for Volunteers and Paid Staff

The information on this form is strictly confidential.

Please provide the name and phone # of two independent references that are not relatives or individuals with strong personal ties to the prospective volunteer.

Names & addresses of most recent church affiliation:

List all previous non-church work involving children or youth (names and full addresses)

Two Persons who may be contacted as references:

Name & position:

Phone:

Email:

Full address:

Name & position:

Phone:

Email:

Full address:

I certify that all information provided in this Reference Form is complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any false information or omission may disqualify me from further consideration, or that discovery of such information at a later date may result in my removal.

Signature _____ Date _____

XII. Appendix B

CONFIDENTIAL

Children's & Youth Ministries Background Check Authorization

Print Name: _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Former Name(s): _____

(Only need to provide former names used over the past 7 years; and any previous addresses prior to 7 years ago.)

Current Address: _____
(Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address: _____
(Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address: _____
(Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Social Security Number: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email: _____

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I hereby authorize **St Thomas United Methodist Church (STUMC)** and its designated agents and representatives to conduct a comprehensive review of my background causing an investigative report to be generated for employment and/or volunteer purposes. I understand that the scope of the investigative consumer report may include the following areas: verification of social security number; current and previous residences; civil and criminal history records from any criminal justice agency in any or all federal, state, county jurisdictions; driving records, birth records, and any other public records. I further authorize any individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency (including the Social Security Administration and law enforcement agencies) to divulge any and all information, verbal or written, pertaining to me, to **STUMC** or its agents. I further authorize the complete release of any records or data pertaining to me which the individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency may have, to include information or data received from other sources. **STUMC** and its designated agents and representatives shall maintain all information received from this authorization in a confidential manner in order to protect the applicants personal information, including, but not limited to, addresses, social security numbers, and dates of birth.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

NOTE: The cost of a background check is \$20 per person and is paid by the church. If you would like to contribute to the cost of the background check, please attach cash or submit a check made payable to "STUMC". Thank you and God Bless!

THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE SHREDED AFTER ST THOMAS UMC HAS RECEIVED A CLEAR REPORT. ST THOMAS UMC DOES NOT STORE OR KEEP SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS.