



Kent Island Methodist Church  
*Growing in Christ. Transforming families. Changing the world.*

## **MinistrySafe**

### Policies and Procedures

*"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?' He called a child, who he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'"*

*"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt 18:5-6)*

Also in scripture, when the disciples tried to keep children away from Jesus, he instructed them to let them come. Jesus welcomed and included children and lifted them up as examples to the faithful. He warned against putting anything in their path that would cause them to stumble.

The church continues to welcome children and youth, knowing that for some it may be the only place where they will experience God's unconditional love and grace. As Christians, we take our responsibilities to children and youth very seriously. When we neglect to take adequate precautions to protect them from abuse while in our care, we fail in our responsibilities as Christians. We are committed to providing as safe and secure an environment as possible for all children and youth who participate in the ministries and activities sponsored by our church.

Therefore, this *MinistrySafe* policy describes the minimum guidelines to provide a safe, secure environment for ministry to all God's people, especially children and youth.

## Requirements for Staff and Volunteers

All adults--paid staff and volunteers--involved in ministry to children (birth through grade 5) and youth (grade 6 through age 17) will be screened. Such screening procedures will include:

1. Complete an application form, sign a participation covenant statement, and have a satisfactory background check\* completed prior to assuming their ministry role and updated every 36 months.
2. Attend training events for abuse and safety education once a year. (these training events will be scheduled four separate times of the year)

### Note:

No person is allowed to be in direct ministry to children or youth if previously convicted of or pled guilty or no contest to any crime involving sexual or physical abuse whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes, but is not limited to, crimes involving pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, murder, kidnapping or pornography.

No person is allowed to be in direct ministry to children or youth if a verdict/judgment has been rendered in any civil action arising out of any personal acts related to sexual abuse of an adult or a child regardless of how long ago the occurrence took place.

The responsibility for this screening process (items 1 and 2 above) is as follows:

1. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is responsible for screening all clergy and paid staff employees.
2. The Youth Director is responsible for screening all youth volunteers involved in ministry to youth.
3. The Children's Ministry Coordinator is responsible for screening all volunteers involved in ministry to children.
4. The Nursery Coordinator is responsible for screening all nursery volunteers.
5. The Office Assistant will be responsible for ensuring administrative activities and supporting background checks.
6. The SAFE Team verifies all staff and volunteers working with children or youth have completed a written application, participation covenant and background check.
7. Cub and Boy Scout units sponsored by KIMC follow the same or equivalent screening guidelines as approved by the Senior Pastor. A copy of the approved guidelines is on file in the church office.
8. Outside groups not screened by KIMC follow the same or equivalent screening guidelines as approved by the Senior Pastor. A copy of the approved guidelines is on file in the church office.
9. All original applications, signed covenants, background checks, and signed statements will be kept confidential in the church office.

\* A "satisfactory background check" means that:

- the volunteer has no criminal convictions (misdemeanor or felony) ever for a sex offense (regardless of the age of the victim), a drug offense or a crime of violence, e.g. armed robbery, assault, murder, etc.
- further, the volunteer in the last ten years may have no felony convictions of a non-violent nature, e.g. burglary, embezzlement, fraud, etc.
- anyone cited for a moving violation while driving children or youth as a part of their volunteer activities with the church will have their driving privileges evaluated.

- if a driver (staff or volunteer) has over 4 points on her/his license for violations in the past 2 years that driver will not be able to transport children or youth for KIMC.

## Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth

Each of the following procedures is important and required in this congregation's comprehensive prevention strategy. Wherever the term "parent" appears it extends to include legal guardians.

The SAFE team includes the pastor, SPRC representative, Trustee and persons responsible for nursery, children and youth educational ministries. The SAFE team will oversee MinistrySafe Operations, ensuring the procedures listed below are adhered to:

1. The "Two Adult" rule.

Minimum supervisory standards require that no matter the size of the group, there will always be at least two adults, unrelated by blood or marriage, who are *MinistrySafe* approved\* present at all times during any Ministry event or Special Event involving children or youth. One of the two may be an adult "roamer" who moves in and out of rooms. We understand that because ministry is relational there may be exceptions to this as highlighted below in our Counseling, Mentoring, and Transportation Guidelines. We understand that there may be rare emergency situations when KIMC staff will need to provide one on one care; however at no time under normal circumstances will an adult be with a child in an isolated or closed situation.

It is preferred that two adults be in each vehicle while children or youth are present. We also understand that logistics may not be practical, however at least two adults need to be involved in the activity as defined in the Two-Adult rule above. With prior written approval, initiated by a parent, an adult leader may drive a youth to and/or from a church sponsored event or activity.

**Ministry Event:** Ministry activity that involves: 1. Consistent program leaders, 2. Consistent event content, and 3. Fixed time frames. (i.e. Sunday school class, Bible Study, Youth Group Meetings, Happy Birthday Jesus Party, Hospitality service, Children's Choir, Acolyte training etc.)

**Special Events:** These are irregularly occurring events which would most likely include overnight travel, meals, and some cost. (i.e. Youth Rally, Mission Trips, etc.)

2. Orientation and Training for Workers.

All in ministry with children or youth (whether paid staff, volunteers or clergy) are required to be certified and then re-certified every three years which will include:

- Appropriate discipline measures with children and youth
- Church's policies for the prevention of child abuse
- MinistrySafe procedures to be used in all ministries with children and youth
- Appropriate steps to report an incident of child abuse
- Details of state laws regarding child abuse

Annual on-site CPR and First Aid training will be offered at least two times a year to ensure at least one adult volunteer per class or activity is trained in CPR/1<sup>st</sup> Aid.

3. Only children ages newborn to 4 years old will be allowed in the Nursery.

\* **MinistrySafe approved** means that the individual has been trained, has successfully passed a background check and has submitted all required paperwork.

4. Age Requirements.
  - "Eighteen or over"  
No worker under the age of 18 will have sole responsibility for any children, except when the worker is in the immediate family of the child.
  - "Five Years Older" rule  
No person involved in children or youth activities shall supervise the group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the children or youth with whom he/she is working.
  - "Drivers 25 or over"  
Adults must be at least 25 years of age to drive with children or youth as passengers to church-sponsored events or activities. Exception for "Drivers 25 or over" rule is that if a paid staff member is under 25, they may be allowed to transport youth and children with approval from the Senior Pastor upon hiring.
  - Transportation  
Church sponsored events will depart and return to KIMC. Youth are not to drive themselves or other youth while traveling to/from/ or during a church sponsored event.
5. Window in All Classroom Doors.  
Each room set aside for children or youth ministries will have a door with a window in it or a half door for visibility.
6. One-to-One Counseling.  
Any counseling sessions with children or youth should be conducted in an environment that provides privacy for the child or youth as well as clear visibility to other adults. Counseling should never occur in an isolated room, hidden area, or questionable situation for the protection of both the youth and leader.
7. Advance Notice to Parents.  
A basic rule for ministry with children and youth is to always give the parents adequate advance notice and full information regarding a special event in which their child will be participating. Parents must give written permission for their child's participation prior to the special event. All events will have a published phone number of the adult in charge (i.e. listed in the calendar event information).
8. Child Security and Registration Procedures.  
A completed registration is required for children and youth to participate in church sponsored activities or ministries. This registration form must minimally include child's name and birth date, parent's name, address, phone numbers, any special medical needs and emergency contact information. In addition, ministries to younger children (infant, preschool and early elementary aged) have special procedures for appropriate drop off/pick up of children during programs.
9. Bathroom Issues.  
Volunteer and staff members should not be intentionally isolated with a child in a bathroom. If a child is escorted to the bathroom or needs personal assistance, a door must always remain open. Other than parents and other family members, only

MinistrySafe approved adult volunteer and staff workers may change a child's diaper.

10. Appropriate Locations, Equipment and Supervision.

Ministries with children and youth are conducted in an endless variety of settings and locations. Some include classrooms, church sanctuaries, fellowship halls, camp cabins, playgrounds, mission trips, retreat centers, buses, parks, and homes. It is the responsibility of the ministry leader to ensure that plans for any activity away from the church campus or with different ministry groups (such as, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Young Life, etc.) include a careful review of appropriate settings, transportation and supervision needs, and safe operation of equipment. In all settings MinistrySafe policies and procedures are followed.

11. Mentoring.

Mentoring is the development of relationships because of ministry between adults and children or youth, these are special relationships involved in a relational ministry, and therefore the unique guidelines are specified below. At KIMC these relationships include Bible Study Small Groups, Mentoring Circles, Coaching, Journey Ministry.

While we encourage all leaders and volunteers to obtain CPR and First Aid training, there is no requirement that mentors have this training.

Permission slips are not required, but parent notification is required and may be either verbal or written. This permission may include transportation, but we encourage leaders to use extreme caution in travelling alone with children or youth.

MinistrySafe Counseling guidelines apply.

One on one mentoring activities will take place only in public places or the church facility.

12. Discipline Measures.

Staff and volunteers always utilize appropriate discipline measures which focus on inappropriate behavior but not the child. Use of verbal direction or redirection of activity is appropriate. If disruptive behavior continues, the child's parent will be located and told of the behavior and asked to remove the child from the activity. Physical punishment or verbal abuse will never be used at any time. We are committed to working with children to determine what they need to fully participate, but not to the detriment of other children in the program.

13. Guidelines for Physical Contact.

- a. Any physical contact between a volunteer or staff worker and a child that provides, or is intended to provide, any form of sexual gratification is prohibited.
- b. Limited physical contact, such as a pat on the back or on the head or a handshake or "high five," is permissible. Hugs are permissible within the sight of others. The volunteer and staff workers must avoid any prolonged hugs and must stop a hug immediately upon the request of the child or parent.
- c. Volunteers and employees shall not abuse children including but not limited to:
  - i. Physical abuse – e.g. strike, spank, shake, slap.
  - ii. Verbal/mental abuse – e.g. humiliate, degrade, threaten, frighten, or the use of a loud/angry voice.
  - iii. Sexual abuse of any kind, including inappropriate touching and exposure.

## Procedure for Reporting a Suspected Incident of Child Abuse

In Maryland, the child abuse and neglect law require that ANYONE who SUSPECTS a child has been or is being mistreated MUST report the matter to the Department of Social Services whether the child resides in Maryland or not. In cases of alleged child abuse, a report must be made to Social Services or the Police. The individual who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse and/or neglect has the following responsibilities and is considered the mandated reporter. The mandated reporter is required to report, orally and in writing, any suspected child abuse or neglect. An oral report can be made by telephone or direct communication as soon as reasonably possible to the local Department of Child-Protective Services. A written report (form 180 copy included with instructions) should be sent to the local Department of Child-Protective Services not later than 48 hours after the contact, examination, attention or discovery that caused the person to believe that the child had been subjected to abuse or neglect, with a copy to the local State's Attorney if the mandated reporter has reason to believe that the child has been subjected to abuse. Any person who, in good faith, makes a report of abuse or neglect is IMMUNE from civil liability or criminal penalty. Maryland law requires the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect; it does NOT require PROOF that abuse or neglect has occurred before reporting. Waiting for proof may involve grave risk to the child and impede services to the family. Proof may be long in coming, witnesses to child abuse and neglect are rare, and the child's testimony may be disbelieved or inadmissible. The church's commitment to the prevention of child abuse requires that its workers with children and youth complete the report of suspected child abuse/neglect according to the requirements of Maryland State law. In addition to the Maryland State law requirements, all volunteers in the congregation are required as stated in the Volunteer Participation Covenant Statement to promptly report to their ministry supervisor or ministry staff, any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

### Summary of Responsibilities for a Person Who has Reason to Believe that a Child has been Subjected to Abuse/Neglect

The following are to be completed within a 48-hour period.

1. Complete the written report of Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect, Form 180 and file an oral report by telephone to the local Department of Child-Protective Services. (410) 758-8000 or (410) 758-0770
2. Submit the written report Form 180 to the local Department of Child-Protective Services, Queen Anne's County, 120 Broadway, Centreville, Maryland 21617
3. Report to the Senior Pastor any behavior that seems abusive or otherwise inappropriate that has occurred on church property or during a church sanctioned event or ministry. If one of the appointed clergy is accused of being a perpetrator or violator of the KIMC MinistrySafe policy, applicable policies and procedures of the Methodist Church and the Northeast Conference will be followed.

## Procedures for Responding to Information Requests Following an Incident of Child Abuse at Kent Island Methodist Church

When an incident of child abuse occurs, to protect the child, the family, the alleged perpetrator, and the church, it is crucial that accurate and reliable information be available from the first moment that church authorities are notified. As soon as possible after being informed of an incident of child abuse, the Senior Pastor shall inform the staff person responsible for administration. It shall be the responsibility of the Staff person responsible for administration to function as "press secretary" for the duration of the crisis. If one of the appointed clergy is accused of being a perpetrator or violator of the KIMC MinistrySafe policy, applicable policies and procedures of the Methodist Church and the Northeast Conference will be followed.

### The Senior Pastor or Staff Member Responsible for Administration...

- Shall consult with the church's attorney or the Conference Chancellor as soon as possible after being notified of an incident.
- Shall confirm that the Senior Pastor has contacted the presiding Elder as soon as possible after being notified of an incident.
- Shall contact the agent for the church's insurance carrier as soon as practical.
- Shall be the sole source of information for any press contacts.
- Shall never knowingly release false, inaccurate, or misleading information to the news media.
- Shall arrange press interviews with church staff or church officers, as requested by news media personnel, so long as such access is deemed prudent.
- Shall consult with the Senior Pastor, other church staff, law enforcement personnel, Maryland or Queen Anne's County Child Protective Services to confirm the accuracy of any information before it is released.
- Shall not, under any circumstances, release the identity of the victim or the victim's family.
- Shall assist the Senior Pastor in providing accurate information to the KIMC congregation as quickly as possible, using e-mail, the web site, telephone tree, prayer chain or other methods.
- Shall keep a written log of all steps taken by the church in response to the incident.

## Participation Covenant for All Workers with Children and Youth (Paid Staff and Volunteers)

The congregation of Kent Island Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all youth and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as 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.

1. Any adult who has been accused in writing, charged in a criminal proceeding, or convicted of child abuse (sexual, physical, or emotional) may not work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity unless specifically approved by the Safe Team.
2. All adult volunteers involved with the children or youth of our church must have been **active participant\*** in the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment. Exceptions may be granted by the Safe Team where circumstances warrant.
3. Adult volunteers involved with children or youth shall observe the two-adult rule as defined in the *MinistrySafe* Policies and Procedures.
4. Adult volunteers involved with children or youth shall attend at least once every three years training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse. The staff person responsible for administration will keep records of training for at least three years.
5. Adult volunteers shall advocate for the protection of the children/youth by reporting any behavior that seems suspicious, questionable, harmful, and/or inappropriate.

*\*An **active participant** regularly attends worship services and/or participates in classes or church activities or is a staff member.*

As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to:

1. Observe and abide by the *MinistrySafe* Policies and Procedures regarding working in ministries with children or youth.
2. Observe the two-adult rule as defined in the *MinistrySafe* Policies and Procedures, **adding that adults must be unrelated by blood or marriage.**
3. Abide by the six-month rule before beginning a volunteer assignment.
4. Participate in training and follow-up educational events provided by the church related to my volunteer assignment.
5. Promptly report any behavior that seems suspicious, questionable, harmful, and/or inappropriate.
6. Inform a pastor of this congregation if I have ever been or am accused in writing, formally accused in a criminal proceeding, or convicted of child abuse.

I have read this Participation Covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above. **Once you have been trained, if you have been arrested and/or charged with a crime, you must notify Pastor Mark Farnell within 24hrs.**

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Signature of Applicant

Date

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Print Full Name