

**St. Luke's United Methodist Church  
Orlando, Florida**

**Child,  
Youth and  
Vulnerable Adult  
Protection  
Policy**

**Adopted: June 2004**

**Revised: July 2005**

**Revised: May 2006**

**Revised: May 2008**

**Revised: March 2014**

**Revised: 2015**

**Revised: November 28, 2017**

**Revised: June 3, 2019**

# Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

## St. Luke's United Methodist Church

### Table of Contents

I. OVERVIEW.....	2
II. DEFINITIONS .....	2
III. SCREENING AND SELECTION OF ADULTS.....	4
IV. ONGOING EDUCATION OF ADULTS.....	5
V. SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH .....	5
VI. TRIP AND RETREAT SUPERVISION .....	9
VII. MEDICAL PROCEDURE .....	10
VIII. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE .....	12
IX. INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY .....	13
 <i>Appendix:</i>	
A. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE .....	15
B. MEDICAL LIABILITY AND RELEASE FORM .....	16
C. INCIDENT REPORT .....	18

# **Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy**

## **St. Luke's United Methodist Church**

### **Orlando, Florida**

## **I. Overview**

### **A. Purpose**

A central tenet of the Christian faith is the inherent value and worth of all people regardless of their gender (identity and expression), race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and abilities. Children, youth and vulnerable adults are least able to protect themselves in our society and are particularly prone to abuse and neglect. St. Luke's United Methodist Church (St. Luke's) desires to do what it can to protect the children, youth and vulnerable adults who participate in the life of its congregation. In a large church on a large campus, it is important to take proactive and preventive steps that will make St. Luke's a safe place for everyone. In addition, our policies encourage opportunities for spiritual formation, meeting the specific needs of children, youth and vulnerable adults.

### **B. Adoption and Amendments**

These policies and procedures have been adopted by the St. Luke's United Methodist Church Council and can be amended by this same group only upon recommendation by the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the Executive Leadership Team. Ministry Councils, Core Teams and Ministry Directors can suggest amendments to the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the Executive Leadership Team for their consideration.

### **C. Exceptions**

There may be occasions when the burden of a policy or procedure is so great that it hinders effective ministry. Whenever this is the case, an approved volunteer or ministry director may seek a waiver from the particular policy or procedure that creates the burden. The Executive Leadership Team, or a majority of its members if the waiver is time sensitive, can grant a waiver. The waiver must be documented in writing and filed appropriately in the church office.

## **II. Definitions**

### **A. Child**

A child is anyone who has not yet entered the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **B. Youth**

Youth are people who have completed the 5<sup>th</sup> grade through the summer after completing the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. A youth can also be someone who is not enrolled in school between the ages of 11 and 19.

### **C. Adult**

Adults are people who completed the summer after their high school graduation or, in the alternative, someone who is at least 19 years old.

**D. Vulnerable Adult**

A vulnerable adult is anyone over the age of 18 who has a physical, mental, or emotional disability that makes it difficult for the person to care for themselves or protect themselves from mal-treatment.

**E. Staff Person**

An adult hired by the church, overseen by the Staff Parish Relations Committee and/or a Ministry Director (ex. interns).

**F. Executive Leadership Team**

The Executive Leadership Team is composed of the appointed clergy and the executive directors of St. Luke's.

**G. Ministry Director**

A Ministry Director is a staff person who supports, in conjunction with Lay Leadership, a specific ministry area and is overseen by Staff Parish Relations Committee.

**H. Approved Adult Volunteer**

An approved adult volunteer is an adult who has gone through the screening process and will be rechecked every 5 years.

**I. Adult Visitor**

An adult visitor is an adult who has not gone through the screening process. Adult visitors can work in the presence of children or youth with an approved adult volunteer, Staff Person, or Ministry Director. They may not be alone in any setting with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

**J. Abuse**

Abuse is defined as any of the following:

1. **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any violent non-accidental contact, which may result in injury. This includes, but it not limited to striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries may include but are not limited to bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.

2. **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is any form of sexual activity with a child, youth or vulnerable adult, whether at the church, at home, or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another minor.

3. **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of intentional conduct, which crushes the spirit of a child, youth or vulnerable adult or attacks his or her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

**K. Review Committee**

The Review Committee will be selected by the Executive Leadership Team and will include three Ministry Directors and two people from the Executive Leadership Team. The Review Committee will be selected on a case-by-case basis and may be comprised of different members

depending on the review agenda. All decisions must be documented in writing and filed appropriately in the church office.

### **III. Screening and Selection of Adults**

Adults, who have associated with St. Luke's for at least six months, and Staff Persons who regularly work in ministry with children, youth and vulnerable adults will be eligible to be screened.

Approved volunteers will be trained annually on issues as it pertains to this policy. The procedures for screening are as follows:

- A.** Before placing an adult in a position of responsibility with children, youth or vulnerable adults, the Ministry Director, designated Staff Person or other person charged with specific responsibility will meet the adult to review the application process. The adult will complete the application and turn in three references to be checked by the Ministry Director, Staff Person or other person charged with specific responsibility for the ministry.
- B.** Whether the adult is being considered for employment or a volunteer position, the St. Luke's human resources staff person will contact the references provided on the application form and any additional persons as the circumstances dictate. A written record of such contacts will be retained with the application form. In addition, the adult shall authorize the church to conduct a criminal background check using both state and federal checks. Background checks will be repeated every 3 years. The following will automatically disqualify an adult from being considered for employment or a volunteer position: sexual offender, sexual misconduct, terrorism, murder, kidnapping, lewdness, indecent exposure, incest, child abuse, child neglect or any other related offense.
- C.** Before beginning work with either children, youth or vulnerable adults, each applicant will read and review these Policies and Procedures and sign a statement of Compliance (appendix A) that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by them.
- D.** After the meeting, at least two of three references have been checked and background check have been accomplished, the Human Resources staff person will decide whether to accept or not accept the applicant as a Staff Person or approved adult volunteer.
- E.** Where it has been determined that an applicant should not work with children, youth and vulnerable adults, those persons involved with the decision will handle it in a sensitive manner. The respective Ministry Director or her/his designee will inform the applicant in person. The specific reasons for the decision will be given, whenever possible. A Review Committee is in place which will allow such an applicant to be considered for work in these ministries after a background check has been returned showing a criminal record. Either the applicant or the Ministry Director may request the review. The Ministry Director will discuss this process should the applicant be interested. The applicant will be required to provide clear and convincing proof of rehabilitation as part of this review process.
- F.** The application, references and results of the background check will be kept in a locked file in the human resources office. The date of the acceptable background check will be recorded in the database of St. Luke's. This information will only be accessible by staff persons who are authorized to have access.

#### IV. Ongoing Education of Adults

St. Luke's shall ensure that annual training focused on current issues of children, youth and vulnerable adults protection is available to and received by those working with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Attendance at these training will be required of all Staff Persons and approved adult volunteers who work consistently with children, youth and vulnerable adults. The training will include:

- A. Review of St. Luke's Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy.
- B. St. Luke's Policy and Procedures on Abuse and the reasons for having them.
- C. The definition and recognition of abuse
- D. The need to maintain a positive classroom/small group environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics
- E. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of children, youth and vulnerable adults events
- F. Abuse reporting responsibilities and procedures
- G. Definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries

#### V. Supervision of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

##### A. General Rules

1. All activities involving children, youth and vulnerable adults will be supervised by two adults, one of which must be an approved adult volunteer. This is called the "Two Person Rule". The ideal ratios for children, youth and adults are as follows:  
  
**Infant:** one adult for every four infants  
**Pre-School:** one adult for every six pre-school children not to exceed eight children to one adult  
**Elementary:** one adult for every eight elementary school children  
**Youth:** one adult for every eight youth, not to exceed ten youth to one adult.
2. When feasible, each room set aside for children, youth and vulnerable adults will have a door with a window.
3. When two adults are not available to supervise in a classroom, classroom doors are to remain open, or classroom doors must have a window for visibility.
4. Where the two adults are family members, a third adult must be present unless there is a designated approved adult volunteer or staff person who is assigned to periodically check their classroom.

5. Parents or other adult visitors will be permitted, as reasonableness dictates, to visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time. Picking up children, youth and vulnerable adults by non-authorized individuals is prohibited.
6. No child, youth or vulnerable adult will be alone with an adult except when being escorted to and from the bathroom.
7. In cases where physical contact may be necessary for purposes of instruction or safety: including, but not limited to, dance classes, gymnastics instruction or other physical activity where the children, youth or vulnerable adults must move about with prescribed form and/or technique, any physical contact will be limited to what is commonly considered appropriate and necessary in the course of instruction and/or safety. Examples of such contact include, but are not limited to, assisted placement or guidance of the body or a body part (arm, leg or head position) to the prescribed position.
8. Physical contact is not allowed with any part of the body that if left uncovered would be considered inappropriate for public viewing. Physical contact is not to be made against the wishes of the child, youth or vulnerable adult unless their physical safety or the safety of others is obviously in jeopardy. Congratulatory touching such as a pat on the back, “high-fives”, handshakes, brief hugs or brief touches on the shoulder or upper back are considered appropriate in the presence of other adults. A child’s hand may be held when the group is walking from one activity to another, if the child wishes to have his/her hand held.
9. All persons (adults and youth) working with children and youth, shall be at least three school years older than the age group with which they are working.
10. Staff Persons, adults and youth may not have children sit on their laps while the room is darkened for a video or when other Staff Persons or approved adult volunteers are not present. At no time should a youth sit on the laps of Staff Persons or adults.
11. Staff persons, youth and adults may not use physical force with a child, youth or vulnerable adult. Examples of physical force include pulling a child, youth or vulnerable adult by the arm or restraining the child, youth or vulnerable adult in some other way. If there is a serious problem with a child, youth or vulnerable adult, the adult in charge of the event will be informed. If it is absolutely necessary to restrain a Child, youth or vulnerable adult to keep him/her from being harmed or from harming others, be as gentle as possible and have someone report to the person in charge, or the Ministry Director immediately.
12. Staff persons, youth and adults will be positive role models for the children, youth and vulnerable adults and will refrain from any form of verbal abuse toward the children, youth and vulnerable adults or each other. Staff persons, youth and adults will always speak to children, youth and vulnerable adults and each other with respect, even when reprimanding.
13. Use of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs at any children or youth ministry event is strictly forbidden.

## **B. Rules Specific to Age Groups**

### **1. Infant to 5th Grade**

Adults responsible for children who are infants through 5th grade will sign or check their child in and out of all programs. Children will be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the adults or by a designated person who checks on program areas.

### **2. Grades 6-12**

a. Youth who are in 6th through 12th grade will check or sign themselves in and out at all programs. Youth in 6th -8th grades who wish to leave before the scheduled end of a church-sponsored activity, however, must be signed out by a parent or other authorized adult.

b. Approved adult volunteers and staff persons are allowed to have one-on-one prayer and listening time with youth who need or desire this individual attention. If a conversation requires a closed door for sensitivity reasons, contact the specific Ministry Director for that area. The Ministry Director or another approved adult volunteer will monitor the situation.

### **3. Counseling of Children and Youth**

In instances of youth or child counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, an appropriate staff person may meet individually with a youth or child with the knowledge of at least one other staff person. At any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session, unless there is glass in the door or wall which gives a clear view into the room. If another adult is not in the building when the counseling occurs, the session should be moved to a public place, such as a restaurant or outside where other people are present.

### **4. Time Following Group Events**

Following children, youth and vulnerable adults group events both on campus and offsite, it is inevitable that occasionally a child, youth or vulnerable adult's transportation will arrive after all other children, youth or vulnerable adults have departed. In those circumstances, a child, youth or vulnerable adult may unavoidably be supervised by one approved adult volunteer or staff person. The approved adult volunteer or staff person who is present shall call the Ministry Director immediately and apprise the Director of this situation. Further, it is suggested that the approved adult volunteer seek the company of the church security personnel or another Staff Person while waiting, and to wait in a highly visible area (i.e. outdoors when practical or in any public indoor area). Only an approved adult volunteer and/or a Staff Person may be present in this situation. NOTE: A child, youth or vulnerable adult shall NEVER be left alone on campus to wait for transportation or for any reason.

## **C. Supervision of Off-site Activities**

### **1. Requirements**

At least two approved adult volunteers or staff persons will be present for all off-site activities involving children, youth and vulnerable adults. Additionally, any meetings held in an individual's home will be supervised by at least two approved adult volunteers



who are not members of the same family. Two family members may be present but a third unrelated approved adult volunteer must also be present if this is the case. The host must be a member of St. Luke's.

2. **Transportation**

Transporting children, youth and vulnerable adults is an important concern. Their safety can be at risk in a variety of ways. Therefore, certain discretion must be used depending upon the event attended, the location of the event, and the age group participating. It is expected that the requirements outlined in this policy will always be followed. Adult drivers will read and sign the Statement of Compliance (appendix A) indicating their agreement to abide by this policy.

- a. Drivers must be known to the designated adult leader and Ministry Director of the event.
- b. When a child, youth or vulnerable adult is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be either the child, youth or vulnerable adult's parent or guardian, an approved adult volunteer or a Staff Person who is at least 21 years old.
- c. When a child, youth or vulnerable adult is transported in a church owned vehicle, the driver must be at least 21 years of age. He or she must also be an approved driver of the vehicle by St. Luke's. Drivers must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated. A copy of the driver's license will be on file at the church.
- d. Drivers must require that seat belts be used at all times and the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts.
- e. Drivers will be advised of a designated route and will not deviate from it except in cases of fuel stops, emergency or road detours.
- f. Persons who drive church owned vehicles to transport children, youth and vulnerable adults will receive procedural training and orientation for the church owned vehicle being operated and will be added to an "Approved Driver List" maintained in the church office prior to driving the vehicle.
- g. In order to be listed on the approved driver list, a Motor Vehicle Record search will also be conducted. The form for this search must be submitted to the Florida U.M. Conference Office of Risk Management for approval.
- h. Drivers are not permitted to text when the vehicle is in motion. In addition, drivers may only use their phones or mobile devices in hands free mode for navigation. All calls that need to be made must be made by other passengers. Local traffic laws must be followed at all times.
- i. All volunteer drivers must have at least two children, youth or vulnerable adults in their vehicle when driving from the church to an offsite church activity.
- j. When the trip is planned and destination is expected to be 100 miles or more from the point of departure, drivers are to be listed on the church's Approved Driver List. If

the trip will exceed 500 miles roundtrip, a Church Trip Form must be completed and submitted to the Office of Ministry Protection at the Florida Conference.

3. **Youth Driving to Offsite Events**

It is understood that youth will at times, and with permission of the Ministry Director, drive their own vehicles to offsite events or activities. Youth who drive their own vehicles will be reminded regularly of the importance of vehicle safety. They will agree to follow all state driving laws with regard to passenger safety and driving behaviors. When there is reason to believe it would not be safe for a youth to drive a vehicle, the supervising adults shall intervene and take reasonable steps to insure the safety of the driver and passengers, and make alternate arrangements for all concerned. Youth passengers riding with a youth driver must have permission from their parents. Permission must be given to the Ministry Director.

4. **Supervision on Church Owned Vehicles**

A church owned vehicle must have one approved volunteer or staff person, other than the driver, when children, youth or vulnerable adults are on board. The approved volunteer must sit in the back-two thirds of the vehicle when it is in motion. An exception can be made to the seating requirement would be if for any one of the following:

- a. The driver requests assistance
- b. The approved volunteer or staff person easily suffers from motion sickness
- c. The vehicle is at capacity and it is unsafe for a child, youth or vulnerable adult to ride in the front passenger seat

## **VI. Trip and Retreat Supervision**

A. Trip and Retreat settings can call for different children, youth and vulnerable adults protection requirements depending on the circumstances. What follows are the requirements of this policy with regard to these varied settings. Adults in attendance on a trip or retreat will read and sign the Statement of Compliance indicating their agreement to abide by the policy and these requirements. In addition, they will be expected to apply their own wisdom and discernment to the needs of a given situation with the protection and safety of the children, youth and vulnerable adults in attendance being the highest priority.

1. An approved adult volunteer or staff person will be required on any trip, retreat, or any other church sponsored event. There will be at least two approved adult volunteers or staff persons present for all trips, retreats and other events where the children, youth and vulnerable adults gather overnight, or away from the church campus.
2. There will be at least one approved adult volunteer for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two approved adult volunteers present shall be of the same gender as the children, youth and vulnerable adults.
3. The person in charge of children, youth and vulnerable adults for each overnight trip and/or retreat will carry medical liability release forms (appendix B) including permission for emergency medical care.

4. In any overnight setting, space should be assigned as follows:
  - a. Space with youth will be monitored at all times by approved adult volunteers.
  - b. Only same gender and adjoining same gender rooms are permitted.
  - c. If all are sleeping in large open area separate space will be designated. In this setting, approved adult volunteers will be placed in such a way as to separate youth by gender.
5. Approved adult volunteers and staff persons are prohibited from sleeping in the same bed, sleeping bag, tent or room (unless in a large open area as referenced above) with children, youth or vulnerable adults. Exceptions can be made by the Ministry Director for family members.
6. If a child or youth identifies their gender as different from their biological sex or they are questioning their gender, advanced written notice identifying the gender with which they are most comfortable must be received by the Ministry Director upon registration for the overnight trip or retreat, so that persons may be appropriately assigned. The Ministry Director may confer with parents and/or guardians to confirm the assignment. If deemed necessary by the Ministry Director, for the comfort of all involved, other youth and their parents may also be consulted.

**B. Visiting Groups**

Visiting Groups using St. Luke's United Methodist Church for overnight stays are asked to agree to and abide by this policy. St. Luke's will not be responsible to document that approved adult volunteers are present. However, it is expected that United Methodist groups in particular will bear in mind the Florida Conference mandate for the protection and safety of children, youth and vulnerable adults and will have approved adult volunteers accompanying overnight trips to the campus. Further, it is understood that any visiting group will execute due diligence, using this policy as a minimum standard, in providing for the safety and protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults while they are on St. Luke's campus.

## **VII. Medical Procedures**

**A. First Aid**

1. First aid kits are available throughout the campus including Gym, Reception Desk, Attic, Fellowship Hall, Workroom in Building A, A-201, Kitchen in Building C, Child Development Center in Building B, and in all Church Vehicles.
2. A first aid kit will also be brought by the adult leader to all off-site activities, trips, retreats or missions. In the event of a medical need, the Ministry Director or adult in charge will be notified immediately. If the medical need is immediate, then the attending adult will begin treating the child, youth or vulnerable adult in accordance with standard first aid procedures and afterward, complete the Incident Report Form (appendix C). The Ministry Director will talk with the parents in a reasonable time frame, letting them know of the incident and how the medical condition was treated.

**B. Automated External Defibrillators(AED)**

An AED is a portable electronic device that automatically diagnoses cardiac arrhythmias and is able to treat them through defibrillation. With simple audio and visual commands, AEDs are designed to be simple to use for the average person. When needed, an adult is authorized to use the AED. The AED is located near in the welcome hall near the gym.

**C. Medical Liability Release Forms**

Children, youth and vulnerable adults must have a medical liability release form (appendix B) completed by a parent or guardian for overnight trips and retreats.

**D. Medications**

Adults unrelated to the child, youth or vulnerable adult are not authorized to dispense any medications without written permission and instructions from the parent or guardian of the child, youth or vulnerable adult.

**E. Serious Injury**

Serious injuries involving broken bones, convulsions, fainting, unconsciousness or other serious bodily injury should be treated following accepted standard first aid procedures and as follows:

1. Keep calm and keep the injured person and other children, youth and vulnerable adults as calm as possible. Speak calmly to reassure the injured child, youth or vulnerable adult.
2. Contact 911 and any medical personnel available on campus. The Ministry Director will have health and emergency contact information and will contact the parents or guardians immediately.
3. Do not move the injured child, youth or vulnerable adult unless the scene becomes unsafe. Do not leave someone who is injured alone.
4. In the event that an injured person is not breathing, or does not have a pulse, send someone immediately to get one of the Automated External Defibrillator units on campus. (Locations listed above). Send another person to get the Ministry Director, the person in charge, or another Staff Person.
5. If the child, youth or vulnerable adult is to be transported to a hospital and the parents cannot be located in time or are otherwise unavailable, the Ministry Director, Staff Person or adult in charge will accompany the child, youth or vulnerable adult to the hospital.
6. The Ministry Director will follow up with the parents as needed.
7. Staff Persons or approved adult volunteers involved in the emergency will complete an Incident Report Form (appendix C) describing what happened immediately following the emergency.

## VIII. Responding to Allegations of Abuse

Everyone in the church has a moral responsibility and a legal duty to report suspected abuse) whenever it comes to their attention, regardless of where that abuse takes place. Reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. Therefore, immediately notify the proper authorities (i.e., the local law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction in which the child, youth or vulnerable adult resides or in which the suspected abuse occurred and/or the appropriate department of children's services) by responding in the following manner:

- A. Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child, youth or vulnerable adult is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare is a mandatory reporter. § 39.201(1)(a), **Florida Statutes**. Contact for the purpose of reporting any suspected or actual abuse can be made by anonymously calling 1-800-962-2873 or online at <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline/report-online>.
- B. Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children, youth or vulnerable adults. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child, youth or vulnerable adult is secured, other designated persons will inform the accused that abuse has been reported. If abuse is observed by, disclosed to, or suspected by an approved adult volunteer and/or Staff Person of the church, the observer will report the incident immediately to the Ministry Director.
- C. If the accused is the appointed clergy or other pastor or a member of her/his family, the allegations will be immediately reported to the District Superintendent and immediately reported to the proper authorities as required by state or local law. The District Superintendent will take responsibility and act according to established rules of *The Book of Discipline* with respect to claims against a Pastor. If the District Superintendent is not available, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office.
- D. Do not interview the child, youth or vulnerable adult regarding the suspected abuse. A trained professional will conduct any such interview. Do not discuss the suspected abuse with anyone, including other Staff Persons, approved adult volunteers, or parents. All information regarding the child, youth or vulnerable adult will be kept strictly confidential.
- E. Notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well-being of the child, youth or vulnerable adult until the guardian or parent(s) arrives. If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning the notification of parents.
- F. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family. The church will provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.
- G. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the Ministry Director and Executive Leadership Team are to report the incident immediately to the District Superintendent.

If the District Superintendent is unavailable, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office.

- H. Keep a written report of the steps taken by the church in response to the reported abuse on an Incident Report Form (appendix C). The report will be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It will be kept in a secure place. It will be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed.
- I. Any contact with the media will be handled by a member of the Executive Leadership Team. The Florida United Methodist Conference Communications Department is a good source of help when media questions arise. The church spokesperson should generally convey a spirit of concern for the spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being of all who are affected, and that the matter is being diligently and appropriately handled.

## **IX. Internet and Technology**

The internet and technology allow people to stay in contact with each other more easily than at any other time in the history of civilization. Some excellent ministry can take place using modern technology, but as with all forms of ministry, there are some inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications. There is no such thing as privacy. Consider anything and everything as public information.

### **A. Parent or Legal Guardian Permission**

In addition to general permission to participate in a ministry or event, obtain written advance parent or legal guardian permission for children and youth, and personal permission for vulnerable adults, in writing for:

1. Taking and using photos of children, youth or vulnerable adults. Use includes, without limitation, posting on any websites, sending them in e-mail or by cell phone messages, making videos for any use or reproducing them in brochures, posters or newspapers.
2. The sharing of any full name or contact information with those other than staff persons or approved volunteers.
3. Any one-on-one communication by a staff person or approved adult volunteer to a youth or child through electronic means including e-mail, phones and social media.

### **B. Email**

1. Conduct any communications in a professional manner. Even though you may be a sounding board for a person having a bad day, the reverse is not true.
2. Do not e-mail to multiple individuals simultaneously unless the individuals in the group are part of a specific and identifiable group (ex. Bible study). Use the "Bcc" option (blind carbon copy) or use the church data base so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.
3. Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information such as event dates, times, locations, or participants.

4. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing a child, youth, or vulnerable adult on an electronic prayer list, use only first names and only then if you think a name is necessary.

**C. Sharing Photos**

1. Obtain permissions to use photos from the internet or other content (poems, songs, etc.). Keep in mind that intellectual property laws are not necessarily universal and can get rather complicated.
2. When posting photos of youth, children or vulnerable adults to public sites, refrain from using names, and never use last names or identifiable information. Check to make sure nametags are not distinguishable.
3. Do not use photos depicting people in vulnerable or compromising situations.

**D. Social Networking Sites**

1. Staff Persons and approved volunteers given responsibility for St. Luke's social media sites (i.e. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) must restrict followers and friends of those sites to include only those that are involved in the ministries at St. Luke's or people who are known to those responsible for the social media.
2. Staff Persons and approved volunteers shall not post compromising statements, photos or videos on any St. Luke's social media site.
3. Posting negative language or text about staff persons, other approved volunteers, youth, children, or their parents on personal or St. Luke's social networking sites such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, etc. is prohibited.
4. Staff Persons and approved volunteers will encourage youth and vulnerable adults to follow these same guidelines.
5. If any of these social networking policies are violated, the most effected Ministry Director will respond after consulting a member of the Executive Leadership Team.

# **Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy**

**St. Luke's United Methodist Church  
Orlando, Florida**

## **Statement of Compliance**

The congregation of St. Luke's United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, approved volunteers and staff people who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church.

I certify that I have read the Policies and Procedures and agree to comply with them.

---

Print Name

---

Signature

---

Date