

SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY
ST ANDREWS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
LEBANON, PA.

The Session, in an effort to continue the goal of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church to foster a friendly, stimulating and thoughtful place for children to know God and experience the love of Jesus Christ by our example and God's blessing, adopts the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and pauses to reflect upon what Jesus was saying about how we are to treat one another, especially children.

“An argument arose among them as to which one of them was the greatest. But Jesus, aware of their inner thoughts, took a little child and put it by his side, and said to them, “Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest.” - Luke 9:46-48

The goal of the Session and therefore the goal of St. Andrews Church in adopting this policy is to provide a safe environment for the children who visit St. Andrews and worship at St. Andrews while at the same time strive to encourage staff and volunteers to continue to work with our children.

The Session, in adopting this policy, recognizes that a child, despite the good intentions of the institution within which the child dwells and is learning, can and has been by history the victim of those who would violate the individual's person and thus violate our church family.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF ST. ANDREW'S POLICY

To provide a safe environment for all children and youth attending St. Andrews church school, attending other activities at the church and attending activities sponsored by the church but away from the church property.

To continue to place in service teachers and volunteers who are spiritually and emotionally mature and respect the child as an individual.

To create standards which will not impede the efforts of St. Andrews to provide Christian ministry, volunteerism and at the same time, maximize safety of our children.

INTENT OF THE POLICY

The goal of St. Andrews in formulating for our children a safe sanctuaries policy, is to do all we reasonably can do to protect any child or youth from being physically, mentally or sexually abused while participating in St. Andrews sponsored events.

A BASIC PROCEDURE TO PROVIDING SAFE MINISTRY FOR OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A. TWO ADULT RULE

Any activity sponsored by St. Andrews church, whether it is a program, event, or a ministry involving children, shall require whenever possible, two adults being present. In the absence of the availability of a second adult for such sponsored activities, the church will provide an adult who will alternate between settings during a multiple function event such as church school or youth gatherings.

B. FIRST AID AND TRAINING (CPR)

St. Andrews will put into place and/or make available to all staff who work with children first aid and CPR training.

C. ANNUAL ORIENTATION (STAFF/VOLUNTEERS)

Staff, who work with children and youth, and volunteers, who regularly work with children and youth, shall receive an orientation for the purpose of being acquainted with:

1. St. Andrews policies for providing safe sanctuaries for children;
2. Procedures to be used in all ministries with children and youth;
3. Appropriate steps to report an incident where a child has been abused and details of state laws regarding child abuse.

D. FIVE YEAR RULE

All paid staff of the church shall be a minimum of five years older than the children or youth they are supervising. This rule shall also apply to volunteers who assist in youth ministry or aid in youth activities except where the volunteer is assisting an adult who complies with this rule. This rule acknowledges that St. Andrews uses volunteers from its senior high students during Church school for the lower grades.

E. OPEN DOOR POLICY

Staff and volunteers shall at all times maintain the doors to their classrooms or counseling sessions with youth open and if doors are closed, then the room in which the activity is taking place should have glass panels through which someone outside the room can view the entire area.

F. ADVANCE NOTICE TO PARENTS

During an event for ministry with children and youth, advance notice to parents and full information regarding the events, the adult and/or young adult participants shall be given. In the event the church is not able to comply with the two adult rule, the parents shall be informed.

G. WRITTEN COVENANT OF PARTICIPATION

Staff and volunteers will be encouraged to fill out and answer a covenant of participation with the children and youth of St. Andrews.

H. PARENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION

(and a session for children)

St. Andrews shall provide on an annual basis an information session during which members of the congregation, families and children can be educated on the facts about child abuse and the components of the church's plan. Suggested speakers and activities could include law enforcement officers, members of the local Children and Youth Agency, medical personnel, attorneys, video vignettes, the church policy and a time for worship and prayer.

I. APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS OF EVENTS

St. Andrews Children and Youth Ministry shall be, whenever possible, conducted at locations which correspond with the type of event being held.

J. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

1. Reporting Requirements: All staff and volunteers shall be acquainted with the reporting requirements of PA State Law and shall be familiar with the forms the session adopts in reporting of child abuse.

2. Designated Spokesperson. The Session shall annually designate a spokesperson to whom all questions or contacts are to be made with respect to an incident of child abuse.

The designated spokesperson should be prepared to state the church policy for prevention of child abuse, the concern of the church for the safety of the victim and all children, and the procedures the church has followed to reduce the risk of abuse to children.

The spokesperson shall, on verification of abuse, notify the insurance company for the church, the attorney and prepare a brief statement. The spokesperson and all staff will cooperate fully with any investigation by law enforcement authorities.

3. Notification to Parents. When an incident of child abuse is suspected or reported, the spokesperson for St. Andrews shall with all due diligence notify the parents of the child.

4. Sympathetic Concern of the Victim. St. Andrews is committed to the faithful response to the victim which shall include taking any allegation very seriously and respecting the victim's privacy as well as providing sympathetic concern for the victim and his or her family.

5. Removal of the Accused From Position Without Hostility. Faithful response to the accused abuser shall include acknowledgement by the accused that the abusive behavior must stop, repent and turn in a new direction. The accused faithful response will include the removal from his or her position as a worker or volunteer with child and youth until the allegations are fully investigated and resolved. The session shall have the authority to provide for permanent removal upon a showing of abuse.

6. Criminal History and Information Check. St. Andrews currently has in effect a requirement that all staff submit a form to the Pennsylvania State Police for Criminal History and Information check.

K. CONGREGATION.

The Session shall acquaint the members of the congregation with the policy in summary form; and, provide copies to any member upon request.