McFARLAND UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST
A Church with Heart

POLICY PROCEDURE MANUAL

Policy Name: **Safety Policy**
Effective Date: January 5, 2023
Review Date(s): 08/15/2026

**A. Mission Statement:** *The congregation of McFarland United Church of Christ aspires to be a safe and nurturing place for all people. Our goal is to provide a safe environment for children, youth, adults, visitors, and staff who participate in church-sponsored programs.*

**B. Inappropriate interaction (in-person or electronic) can include:**

- **Physical abuse:** a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm.
- **Emotional abuse:** a person exposes a child, youth, or adult to spoken or implied violence or emotional cruelty.
- **Neglect:** form of abuse in which a person endangers a child's, youth's or adult's health, safety, or welfare through negligence.
- **Sexual abuse:** sexual stimulation or direct sexual contact between individuals where an age or status difference exists, or any interaction between a child and an adult in which the child or adult is being used for the sexual stimulation of another person.

**C. Reporting Responsibilities:** Any inappropriate interaction shall be promptly reported to the Pastor or Servant Leadership Team (SaLT) member. Childcare workers who become aware of abuse or neglect of children under our care should report their concern to the Pastor or SaLT member for further action, including reporting to authorities as mandated or appropriate. In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at the church or during any sponsored program or activity, the following procedure shall be followed:

- The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- The person alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
- Civil authorities will be notified as appropriate, and the church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
- Our insurance company will be notified and any incident documentation completed as required. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
- The pastor will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the

congregation. All other representatives and members of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.

**D. Screening Policy**
The Youth Leader, or Pastor if no formal Youth Leader has been named, is responsible for requesting the Personnel Committee to screen adult volunteers participating in church-sponsored overnight activities, or who anticipate prolonged unmonitored contact with youth or children. Initial screening will consist of a volunteer application with a screening questionnaire and an authorized Criminal Records Background Check. Submitted forms and the background check will be reviewed; references listed on the survey will be checked as necessary, and a personal interview conducted as necessary. Any person known to have committed previous inappropriate interactions shall be prohibited from serving in a similar capacity.

**E. Maintenance and Records:**
All records collected in compliance with these guidelines shall be stored in a secure location to protect the integrity and confidentiality of the records.

**F. Education:**
These guidelines will be made available to all members of the congregation and public by posting on the church's website (https://www.mcfarlanducc.org/), on a church bulletin board, and to others upon request. All staff and volunteers who work directly with children and youth are required to review these guidelines and to sign a statement that they have reviewed them and will comply with its requirements. Staff and volunteers who work directly with children and youth will be required to complete two on-line training courses sponsored by the Insurance Board in partnership with Praesidium, or their equivalent: "Foundations - Preventing Abuse in Youth-Serving Organizations" and "Keeping Your Church Safe" as listed at https://www.insuranceboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/INBD-PraesidiumFlyer-8_5x11-13-Digital_NEW-121824-1.pdf.

**G. Best Practices and Regular Operating Procedures**
**The Two Adult Rule:** Children and youth in educational, recreational, and related church programs of our congregation shall be under the care and supervision of two unrelated adults. If a group program or activity requires an exception to the "Two Adult Rule", a parent or guardian will be asked to provide written consent for their child's participation in that group activity. In lieu of a second adult, an adult providing nursery care may be accompanied by an unrelated youth who has completed the Red Cross Babysitting and Child Care course. Volunteers and staff working with our children or youth should not allow themselves to be alone with a child or with children out-of-sight of other adults whenever possible. Adults will not engage in any written communication or electronic communication with an individual youth using email, internet messaging services, or any social media platform for reasons other than church related activities.

**H. Discipline:**
The purpose of discipline with children and youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of religious responsibility, respect, and cooperation. No child or youth shall be disciplined by any form of physical punishment. Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insult, or shouting. Volunteers and staff assisting in the classroom are encouraged to listen to the child or youth,

communicate expectations of appropriate behavior, use time-outs, or give alternate choices. If a child or youth continues to be disruptive, the parent or guardian will be contacted. If the situation cannot be resolved the child or youth will be excused from the activity.

**I. Church-Sponsored Children's and Youth Group Activities:**
No adult leader volunteer or staff should initiate, encourage, or tolerate inappropriate interaction with or among children or youth. Establishing behavior expectations and boundaries is the responsibility of the adults. All participants are expected to remain with the group throughout the times established for the program. No pairing or separation of individuals from the group to other parts of the building or grounds is permitted without the approval of supervising adults. In the event of overnight programs, co-mingling of opposite genders in sleeping arrangements is not permitted. Adult supervision of the group is required at all times. No church-sponsored activity will be held at an individual's home with only one adult present. The Church will request written consent from the parent or guardian before a child can attend activities or programs held away from the McFarland United Church of Christ building and grounds.

**J. Substance Awareness:**

- **Drugs:** The use of any illegal drugs, or misuse of prescription medications or over-the-counter drugs is strictly prohibited at all church-sponsored events on or off church property.
- **Tobacco and Vaping:** Tobacco and vaping products may not be used inside the church or outside the church at any church-sponsored event where children or youth are present.
- **Alcohol:** Alcohol may not be used in the presence of children or youth at any church-sponsored child or youth event held at the church. Where alcohol may be present at adult or family functions (bowling, sporting events, restaurants, camping, etc.), we expect responsible and appropriate behavior.
- **Retreat/Youth Trip Medication Procedures:** All parents or guardians of participating youth will provide all over-the-counter and prescription medications in a well-labeled zip-lock bag, including directions of dosage and content to the designated leader prior to departing on retreats or youth mission trips. The designated leader will dispense all medications as directed by the parent or guardian and provide emergency contact information.

**K. Parental Guidelines:**
We strongly encourage parents, when on the premises with their children, to know at all times where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing. It is strongly encouraged that children 10 years old or under do not play in unsupervised areas.

**L. Auto Safety Policy:**
In order to drive any unrelated youth or child to or from a church-sponsored event, volunteer drivers must be a minimum of 18 years old, have a valid driver's license, and provide proof of insurance. One unrelated child or youth wishing to ride to a church-sponsored event with a licensed individual under the age of 18, as accorded by the Wisconsin Probationary Driver License Restrictions (https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/dmv/teen-driver/teen-sfty/index.aspx) must have written permission from a parent or guardian. Adult volunteers will see that children and youth wear seatbelts or are secured in appropriate child safety seats when being transported for church-sponsored

events.  No more passengers than can be safely restrained will be carried in a vehicle for these activities. There is a “zero tolerance” for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including illegal substance or the misuse of prescribed or over-the-counter medications. Zero Tolerance means a driver cannot drive with any measurable amount of alcohol or specified drugs in the body.

**M. Sex Offenders:**

- **Philosophy:** McFarland United Church of Christ strives to be an inclusive community, respecting our differences in beliefs, opinions and life experiences. However, concern for the safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of an individual. To the degree that any person’s actions seriously compromise the health of this congregation, our response as a people of faith must reflect our concern for the overall safety and well-being of our members.

- **Procedures:** If someone with a pending accusation or conviction of a sexual offense wishes to become a regular part of our congregational life, he or she must be willing to abide by the guidelines of this policy to ensure both the well-being of our members and to help the individual avoid any situation where he or she may face false allegations. These guidelines also apply to current members and friends should they face charges or conviction for sexual offenses.

  The individual with a pending accusation or a conviction of a sexual offense must meet with the Pastor to discuss his/her desire to become part of or continue in the regular life of this congregation. The individual must indicate a willingness to make available to the Pastor and SaLT any background material or law enforcement contact information that would be helpful in evaluating his/her situation. The individual also must express a willingness to avoid any unsupervised communication or contact with a child or youth.  SaLT may evaluate the risks and identify additional procedures in order for the individual to participate in the life of the church.

**N.  Policy Review and Amendments**

This policy should be reviewed annually by SaLT at their first meeting after the Annual Meeting to ensure that new SaLT members are familiar with the policy and to approve and implement necessary changes.