

AUUC Safe Congregation Policy
Safety and Security Task Force
Approved by AUUC Board, March 3, 2021

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Safe Building Policy is to help protect the life, property, and security of the Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church (AUUC) facility and all of its occupants. The policies identified within should inform the development and implementation of all safety and security procedures, documents, and guidelines of the church, all of which must comply with the UUA Safe Congregation Policies (<https://www.uua.org/safe>) and all applicable laws and regulations.

WHO is AFFECTED by this POLICY: This policy applies to everyone who is on the church and its property.

WHEN is this POLICY APPLIED: This policy is in effect at all times, at all events on the church premises and should be used as guidance for all church-related events conducted off premises.

HOW will this POLICY BE UPDATED: This policy will be reviewed by the Safety and Security Committee (SSC) on a biannual basis and will be updated as needed. All updates must be approved by the Board. Any updates to this policy should be reflected in other Safety and Security documents, as necessary, including rental agreements.

OVERVIEW: It is deemed necessary to provide safety and security without interfering with the core mission and activities of the church; in other words, to both protect the faithful and reach out to the community. As such, AUUC is adopting a Whole Church Focus on security, which can be likened to a Neighborhood Watch dynamic where everyone is responsible for the safety of the church; however, there are differing levels of responsibility based on one's roles and activities at the church. At a minimum, everyone is expected to conduct themselves in a safe and respectful manner. This policy is to be supported by other safety and security procedures, guidelines, and documents, including, but not limited to: safety and security guidelines, emergency response procedures, building lockup guidance, financial safeguards policies and procedures, emergency preparedness plan, strategic operations plan, community response guide, and other documents referenced within this policy.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES: As this policy applies to everyone who uses the church and its property, everyone has responsibilities to maintain safety and security onsite, which at a minimum includes doing the following:

- **Recognize:** Maintain awareness
- **Report:** Report suspicious persons or actions
- **Respond:** Follow evacuation and security actions during an emergency.

Additional specific responsibilities may be required of those using the church, including:

- **Safety and Security Committee (SSC):** Draft or be involved in the drafting of all safety and security policies, procedures, and related documents. Facilitate training of the Security Response Team and other groups, as needed.

- **Security Response Team (SRT):** Staff, leaders (i.e., Board members, Committee chairs, leaders of groups, etc.), specific committees (e.g., greeters, ushers, worship associates, etc.), and other groups are considered to be part of the SRT. All members of the SRT will be expected to organize and direct our response(s) to emergencies. They should therefore understand the emergency response procedures, know the location of emergency exits and equipment, be able and willing to help guide others in an emergency, and maintain calm. Additionally, they should:
 - Be familiar with and abide by all safety and security procedures and guidelines.
 - Participate in safety and security training.
 - Develop safety procedures for their group and the church, in consultation with the SSC, as necessary.

- **Minister:** The minister is a leader of the church and should abide by all of the responsibilities of church leaders. In addition, the minister has a special relationship with congregants and should not hesitate to inform the Executive Committee and the SSC (or even the police, if necessary) in the case of a congregant, friend, or visitor who is deemed a potential threat to the security and safety of the church.

- **Staff:** Staff are looked to as Leaders of the church and should abide by all of the responsibilities of Church Leaders. Staff often have direct relationships with congregants and should not hesitate to inform the Board and the SSC (or even the police, if necessary) in the case of a congregant, friend, or visitor who is deemed a potential threat to the security and safety of the church.

- **Teachers:** Teachers have a unique responsibility as they are interacting regularly with the most vulnerable population of AUUC. As such, they are bound by all policies, procedures, and training by the Children's and Youth RE program, its staff, and the CSDC. Teachers are considered part of the SRT and should therefore fulfill those responsibilities.

- **Leaders:** Leaders are defined as those who hold leadership positions within the church, including the Board and organizers or leaders of groups. Church leaders are considered members of the SRT and should therefore fulfill those responsibilities.

- **Congregants, Friends, and Visitors:** Anyone on church premises is expected to behave in a safe manner, to follow instructions from the SRT as necessary, and to ask questions when the safety or security implications of a situation are unclear.

- **Renters:** Renters must comply with these policies on premises as well as those referenced in rental policies and procedures.

SPECIFIC SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICIES: Below are AUUC policies related to safety and security. Additional procedures, guidelines, documentation, and training may be required to ensure full and appropriate enforcement of the policy.

Accessibility: The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) does not apply to religious organizations. Nevertheless, accessibility and ADA recommendations will be considered in modifications to AUUC'S buildings and grounds.

Alcohol: Alcoholic beverages may be served at functions on church property at the discretion of the event organizer, as long as alcohol consumption is done safely and responsibly, and in compliance with all federal, state, and local laws and ordinances regarding the serving and consumption of alcohol (see www.abc.virginia.gov)
Additionally:

- No person under the age of 21 years old will drink alcoholic beverages on church property or at a church function at any time.
- No alcohol will be available at any event directed primarily to and/or for minors.
- When alcohol is being served on church premises and at church-sponsored events, the following rules apply:
 - Adult supervision is required at the alcohol table at all times.
 - The event organizer must serve food.
 - The event organizer must offer a separate area with ample non-alcoholic beverages in a prominent location.
- Hard alcohol is prohibited at events on Accotink Property unless approved by the Executive Committee.
- Before and after church functions, there shall be no open containers of alcoholic beverages stored at the church. Unopened containers of alcoholic beverages on the premises shall be kept in a secured (e.g. locked) location (such as in the Minister's office).
- Event organizers must ensure that no person appearing intoxicated will be allowed to drive away from any church-sponsored event.

Armed Intruder: AUUC will follow law enforcement recommendations for building safety and offer training, all of which will be outlined in procedures and guidelines related to Safety and Security. At this time, the recommendation is a "run, hide, fight" plan.

Bomb Threat: The church will develop, maintain, and communicate a plan to deal with bomb threats, and train the SRT so that they are able to implement the plan as necessary.

Building Closure or Activity Delay: In situations such as severe weather, health concerns, or other emergencies, it may be necessary to cancel AUUC activities, or to delay them by some number of hours. On weekdays, the AUUC building will be closed when Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) closes schools, and on-site activities may be delayed when school is delayed. On Sundays, the decision to cancel services is made jointly by the Board President and the Minister, by 10:30 PM on the preceding Saturday night. This decision will be communicated immediately through AUUC's various media outlets.

In situations that require a longer closure and cancellation of activities (i.e., weeks or months), the decision to close and cancel activities should be made by the Board after consultation with the Executive Committee and based on local, state, and/or federal guidelines, policies, and laws.

With the advent of a variety of methods to conduct AUUC business and activities virtually, activities, meetings, and church services may continue virtually when in-person events have been cancelled.

Buildings and Grounds Maintenance and Safety: AUUC will strive to maintain a safe building and property by conducting regular inspections and maintenance by the Buildings and Grounds Committee. The premises will be well maintained, in compliance with local codes, and made as safe as reasonably possible for members, guests and anyone else who comes to our facility.

Care and Safety of Minors (ages birth through 17): AUUC intends to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and youth during events sponsored or hosted by the church. The Children's Spiritual Development Committee (CSDC) and Director of Spiritual Development (DSD) are responsible for developing, maintaining, and communicating procedures regarding specific safety and security measures for children and youth. Anyone younger than age 18 (and/or are attending primary or secondary school) is considered a child or youth.

Disruptive Behavior: The AUUC Board of Directors may deny entry to the Church property, or attendance at any Church service or function, to any person deemed to be disruptive or harmful to the Church. This behavior includes, but is not limited to the following: 1) threats to the safety of any adult or child; 2) disruption of worship services, church functions, or church activities; and 3) continued or severe bullying or harassment of an adult or child in the church.

If any person's behavior warrants immediate action, such action will be taken by an SRT member, a responsible AUUC member, and/or a staff member. This may include asking the offending person to leave the property, or suspending the meeting or activity until such time as it can be safely resumed. If further assistance is necessary, the Police Department may be called. If not directly involved, the members of the Executive Committee must be notified of these actions as soon as possible.

Drugs: No illegal drug use, possession, distribution, or sale is allowed in or around the property.

Firearms: In 2016, the congregation voted to restrict open carry and concealed guns; thus, AUUC is considered a Gun-Free Zone; no person is allowed to carry a gun on church property. The only exempted category of firearm carriers are licensed law enforcement officials on official duty at AUUC. Refer to relevant law: [Virginia Code §18.2-283](#) for further information.

If anyone at AUUC suspects a person of carrying a firearm, they must notify a member of the SRT. The suspected person should be told to leave and that if they remain, they are trespassing. If the person carrying a firearm on church property refuses to leave, a member of the SRT should contact the police.

Fire Safety: AUUC will maintain fire alarm and sprinklers up to code in all areas of the AUUC buildings where such equipment is required. Current emergency exit diagrams will be visibly posted in appropriate areas of AUUC buildings, including in every classroom, in the kitchen, and by each exit. Annual RE Teacher training will include

directions about where teachers should take their classes in response to a fire alarm or fire drill. Parents/Guardians will be informed about these procedures. Long-term tenants of AUUC, will be asked to carry out regular fire drills.

First Aid kits: First aid kits will be located in accessible areas upstairs and downstairs out of the reach of small children. The Church Administrator will ensure on a semi-annual basis that the first aid kits are maintained and properly restocked.

Food Allergies: AUUC will try its best to avoid exposing people to allergens via labeling of food items to identify potential allergens and cleaning eating areas and utensils with warm soapy water. AUUC will develop and maintain food preparation and allergen policy and procedures to best protect the community; however, it is considered to be the responsibility of the person (or guardian of a child) eating food to ask questions or avoid food that may contain allergens.

Harassment and Bullying: Harassment and bullying in any form are not tolerated on AUUC property or at church-sponsored events. For the purposes of this policy, harassment and bullying are defined as:

- Being severe, pervasive or persistent, or
- Creating a hostile environment, such that it interferes with or limits a person's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by AUUC, or
- Based on a person's race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, socio-economic status, religion/spirituality, or other immutable qualities of a person.

Adults experiencing or witnessing harassment or bullying may first handle this behavior directly, so long as they feel safe doing so, by requesting that the offender stop the behavior, while also indicating how the behavior is unacceptable based on the adult's experience and/or the definitions above. If this does not stop the harassment/bullying or the behavior seems to be pervasive or affect others at AUUC, as well, the adult should raise the issue to the Minister and/or the Executive Committee.

AUUC is governed by the UUA youth policy on harassment and bullying outlined in [Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying and Retaliation at Youth Events](#). Incidents of alleged sexual, emotional, and/or physical harassment of minors must be reported to the DSD, who will determine whether the involvement of Child Protective Services or law enforcement is necessary, or whether it is appropriate to refer the incident to the Executive Committee for further investigation and determination of consequences, as per Executive Committee procedures. If the incident involves the DSD, the incident should be reported to the Executive Committee.

Hazardous Material Storage: All hazardous materials such as paint, solvents, and chemicals must be stored in a locked shed, closet, or storage cabinet in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Less toxic cleaning supplies will be kept out of easy access by young children.

Internet, Email, and Social Media Usage: AUUC regularly uses electronic means to conduct communication within and without the church community. Any church business

conducted via email, web, or social media must conform to accepted practices and behavior within AUUC and thus must be in accordance with UU principles. If staff, leaders, or congregants are found to be misusing these channels of communication, the violation will be communicated to them by the Executive Committee and resulting action may involve their church email being deactivated, social media follows/connections disabled, and exclusion from other church-based electronic communications methods or applications. Unacceptable use includes harassment, intimidation, threats, stalking, explicit images, solicitation, etc. It is prohibited to use personal information of church congregants for commercial purposes, as outlined in the communications policy.

The Communications Committee has rights and responsibilities regarding personal safety: 1) to edit any AUUC media for issues relating to hateful, malicious, uncivil and disrespectful content, and 2) to edit any AUUC media for issues of attacks or complaints against an individual, financial solicitations, endorsements of a political candidate or party. When the Communications Committee removes any of the above material that is of a threatening, exploitative, or abusive nature, they must report such actions to the Executive Committee.

All electronic communication with children and youth must conform to the procedures created by the Children's and Youth RE program, the DSD, and/or the CSDC. Children/youth cannot be contacted electronically until the initiator of such contact has read these policies and/or has communicated with the DSD.

Additionally, electronic means of communication must not be used to bully or harass staff, congregants, visitors, or the church itself. This behavior is unacceptable and will be addressed by the Executive Committee, as needed. If any of these communication methods are used to bully or harass minors or vulnerable adults, the DSD and Minister will immediately address the issue according to the policies and procedures of AUUC and according to the laws of Virginia. The laws and rules regarding minors are much more restrictive in order to protect a vulnerable population.

IT Security: At all times, church passwords must be protected, as well as all congregants' electronic personal data. Clear procedures must be developed to ensure privacy and security is maintained and to ensure that safe guidelines are followed that are respectful of all individuals.

Only AUUC staff and a few others specially designated will be given access to computers that connect to the AUUC internal network. When staff or others are permanently disconnected from the church, their IT access will be withdrawn. Additionally, the following policies must be followed:

- The internal wireless network should use the best security affordable to AUUC.
- Wireless guest accounts must be blocked from the internal network.
- All AUUC computers must be password protected.
- All AUUC computers must be locked in offices after hours.
- All AUUC computers must have virus protection.
- Church financial data must be maintained in a secure fashion.

Medical Emergency: Any person attending a church event who suffers a medical emergency will be treated promptly with care and respect, to the best ability of those

present. The SSC will develop, maintain, and communicate Emergency Response procedures; the SRT will be regularly trained on these procedures. An AED is located in the church gallery and First Aid Kits are in accessible locations upstairs and downstairs.

Missing Person: The SSC will develop, maintain, and communicate a missing persons procedure. If any person attending a church event is reported missing, the missing persons procedure will be followed. This may include contacting the police if the missing person is considered at risk.

Parking Lot: An event organizer must ensure that the parking lot lights are turned on for the duration of any event from sundown until an hour after the end of the event.

Personal Data: Personal data of all AUUC staff, congregants, and visitors (past and present) must be kept secure. Financial, legal, or governmental (e.g., SSN) information must be kept in a secure location, preferably under lock and key. When no longer needed, this data must be disposed of via shredding, deleting, and/or “scrubbing” to ensure that it is no longer accessible by third parties

Personal Property: All congregants, visitors, staff, and renters are responsible for their personal property and should either secure their valuables or keep them with them at all times. The church is not responsible for lost or stolen personal property.

Sex Offenders: Sex offenders must report convictions or active accusations to the Minister and Board President. Situations that occur involving an individual accused or convicted of sexually aggressive behavior will be addressed on an individual basis as follows:

- An individual who has been convicted of or pled guilty to a charge of sexual misconduct or who has been determined to have engaged in any form of child abuse in any civil, criminal, administrative or ecclesiastical forum will not have contact with children, youth, vulnerable adults, or the parties involved.
- If an individual has been legally accused of sexual misconduct and is currently involved in a civil or criminal litigation of such a charge, that individual will not have contact with children, youth, vulnerable adults, or the parties involved until there is final disposition or resolution of the case.
- In the event that a person has been convicted of a sexual offense and completed a term of incarceration and seeks to enter the life of AUUC, members of the Executive Committee and Director of Spiritual Development will meet with them to make a written determination as to the ways in which the individual may be safely involved in the life of the congregation.

Severe Weather and Natural Disasters: AUUC will develop, maintain, and communicate Emergency Response Procedures related to severe weather and natural disasters.

Sickness and Disease Prevention: Accotink is a large church community which includes some who may be more at-risk for communicable diseases and their effects, including the elderly and infants, plus others who are immuno-compromised. In order to be protective of all and to help prevent or stop the spread of disease, AUUC asks that church goers do not attend church or church events for at least 24 hours after the last

symptom or until no longer contagious if they experience fever, diarrhea, and/or vomiting; have lice; or have a contagious disease, infection, or parasite (e.g., ringworm, pinkeye, MRSA, etc.) If you have been prescribed antibiotics for a contagious disease, do not participate in AUUC activities until 24 hours after the antibiotic is first taken. Please be thoughtful of others' health before attending AUUC functions or services if any of the following symptoms are present: sore throat, headache, rash, severe itching, unusual eye/nasal discharge, significant tiredness/crying/irritability, uncontrolled coughing, difficulty breathing, or wheezing.

Smoking: AUUC is a smoke-free facility. No smoking of tobacco and illegal drugs, vaping, or e-cigarette use is permitted indoors or within 50 feet of entrances (except in the roofed-in patio area in front of the church). Smokers must properly dispose of smoking materials in approved containers.

Violence: AUUC does not tolerate any type of violence committed by or against its staff, members or friends. All persons are prohibited from making threats or engaging in violence activities while on AUUC premises or attending an AUUC event. Conduct that is prohibited, but is not limited to, includes:

- Causing physical injury to another person
- Making threatening remarks
- Displaying aggressive or hostile behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person or subjects another individual to emotional stress
- Intentional damage of AUUC property or property of another on AUUC premise
- Possessing a weapon while on AUUC property
- Committing acts motivated by or related to, sexual harassment or domestic violence

Any potentially dangerous situations must be immediately reported to a member of the SRT who will raise the issue to the Executive Committee, as needed. Reports of incidents warranting confidentiality will be handled appropriately.

Threats, threatening conduct, or any other acts of aggression or violence will not be tolerated. AUUC will actively intervene at any indication of a possibly hostile or violent situation. Consequences will be rendered for any person determined to have committed such acts at AUUC or at an AUUC event. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, counseling or warnings, temporary or permanent suspension from future AUUC events, or formal reports to the proper authorities.