

St. Matthew's United Methodist Church – Security Policy

In order for St. Matthew's United Methodist Church to provide a welcoming and safe facility for all who wish to participate in its mission and ministry, it is both prudent and important to standardize implementation of the following security practices.

- 1) This policy applies to all activities taking place on church property and all persons while on church property. A copy of this policy is available via the church office and/or from the church website.
- 2) [Any activities involving children and/or youth must ALSO comply with St. Matthew's Child Protection Policy. A copy of the St Matthews Child Protection Policy is also available via the church office and/or from the church website.](#)
- 3) St. Matthew's subscribes to a "*if you see something, say something*" policy. The church has established a close working relationship with Fairfax County Emergency Services to respond expeditiously when asked for assistance. While physical controls and other procedures described in this policy are important, observant and vigilant efforts on the part of those participating in church activities remain of paramount importance in assuring the security of our facility and the protection of members, staff and guests.
- 4) St. Matthew's will maintain a well-lighted environment surrounding the main church building. This will include lights that illuminate at dusk and lights that are on motion-control.
- 5) Exterior access to the premises is controlled by an electronic security system that is monitored 24/7. Access to the building is controlled and recorded by the issuance and use of a "fob" which allows certain exterior doors to be opened electronically. Entrances to the building and along many hallways are also monitored by security cameras. Individuals requiring frequent access to the building after-hours and wishing to be issued a "fob" must complete an access request form on the church website and return it to the church office. To be issued a "fob", the applicant must successfully complete and pass a background check. All fob holders must sign an agreement acknowledging their responsibilities and agreeing to follow all church security procedures.
- 6) Anyone other than church staff coming to the church during weekday office-hours must sign-in with the church office.
- 7) Visitors/maintenance contractors/government inspectors, etc. with a need to access areas of the building used by the weekday school during regular school hours must coordinate visits in advance with the Weekday School Director/Assistant Director to minimize any impact to Weekday School activities. Under no circumstances may any adult be present alone in any room occupied by a student.
- 8) Keys for individual offices or other interior rooms will be issued based on an individual's specific requirements. Individuals needing specific keys should submit a request to the Board of Trustees via the church office. Key holders must also sign an agreement similar to that of fob holders acknowledging their responsibilities and agreeing to follow all church security procedures. It is the intent of this policy to severely restrict the permanent issuance of interior room keys to individuals other than staff and those in senior positions of authority at the church.
- 9) As a general practice, exterior doors should remain closed (not propped open) and locked at all times for the protection of our children, members, staff, and visitors. The Board of Trustees will develop procedures in coordination with the church leadership and staff to allow specific doors to be unlocked for specific functions as long as it can be done safely given the current threat environment at the time of the function. Doors that are authorized to be unlocked for specific functions must have individuals assigned to monitor the unlocked door for the duration of the function, to greet those attending the function, and more importantly to be aware of and report immediately to the senior staff member present any suspicious individuals who approach or enter the building. If a staff member is not immediately available, suspicious activity should be reported to the on-call pastor via the On-Call Pastor Cell Phone. Individuals who feel their activities require a door to be propped open for a brief period of time (e.g. unloading supplies) should consult the Board of Trustees prior to the activity for specific guidance and authorization. Doors that are authorized to remain open for extended time periods and for specific purposes must also be monitored constantly to ensure no unauthorized persons enter the building while the door is propped open. Any failure to comply with this policy may result in the immediate rescission of approval for the specific activity whether church or non-church related.

- 10) As the threat environment in our community and/or for St Matthews specifically changes, the Board of Trustees may amend these procedures and/or implement new safeguards including requesting the presence of an armed security guard at certain activities. Decisions regarding such changes will be made in consultation with church leadership and staff. The rationale for such changes will also be communicated to the congregation as soon as practical.

- 11) In the event of a fire alarm, everyone must immediately exit the building. Once fire department personnel arrive, staff and the Board of Trustees will work with fire department personnel to determine the cause of the alarm and when it is safe to re-enter the building.

- 12) In the event of a cardiac emergency, St. Matthews has two automatic electronic defibrillators located outside the main office area and in the hallway leading to the social hall. Use of automatic electronic defibrillators is restricted to those trained or otherwise knowledgeable of their proper use.

- 13) Questions regarding this policy and/or requests for guidance for specific situations (e.g. requesting permission to unlock and/or prop open doors) should be directed to the Board of Trustees via the church office. Urgent after-hours requests may be directed to the Board of Trustees via the On-Call Pastor Cell Phone.

- 14) Failure to follow this policy and its associated procedures may result in loss of fob access and/or revocation of permission for use of the building.

Updated version approved by the Board of Trustees
August 1, 2023