

**“SAFE SANCTUARIES” CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY  
CULLOWHEE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
Cullowhee, North Carolina**

*“Then he [Jesus] put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them,  
‘Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me,  
and anyone who welcomes me welcomes my Father who sent me.’”  
Mark 9:36-37*

**Statement of Covenant:** As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth, as well as that of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly-defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child and youth will be “. . . surrounded by steadfast love, . . . established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (from “Congregational Pledge 2,” “Baptismal Covenant II,” in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

### **Definitions**

**Paid Staff Person:** someone paid by the church, overseen by Staff-Parish Committee, and screened.

**Screened Adult:** a volunteer who has gone through the screening process. The person may or may not be a member, but must have been a regular attendee for at least six months.

**Adult Volunteer:** a person who has not been screened; must work with a Screened Adult or a Paid Staff Person.

**Youth Volunteer:** a person under the age of 18, but at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth being supervised; must work with a Screened Adult or a Paid Staff Person.

**Physical Abuse:** a non-accidental contact which may or does result in injury; includes but is not limited to: striking, biting, shaking, kicking, pinching.

**Sexual Abuse:** any form of sexual activity or inappropriate contact by a person of any age with a child/youth on church property, or at a church-sponsored event, or anywhere as a result of the relationship of “church leader – child/youth.” The abuse may or may not involve physical contact.

**Emotional Abuse:** exposing a child/youth to spoken or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty; attacking his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

**Neglect:** not hearing or addressing a child/youth’s basic need for health, welfare, or safety.

## Recruiting, Screening, Hiring of Child/Youth Workers and Volunteers

1. Prior to supervising children/youth, each person(including paid staff persons) must be screened by means of a written application form, an interview by a paid staff member or other designated person, reference check, previous employment check, and a criminal background check. The criminal background check must be repeated every four years.
2. Prior to supervising children/youth, each person will sign a "Participation Covenant Statement" verifying that he/she has read, understood, and agrees to abide by this "*Safe Sanctuaries Child/Youth Protection Policy.*"
3. Prior to supervising children/youth, each person will undergo an initial orientation session that includes child abuse information, his/her responsibility for reporting questionable behavior, and explanations of this policy. Attendance at annual "refresher" training sessions will be required of all Paid Staff Persons, Screened Adults, and Adult Volunteers who work consistently with children/youth.
4. Any person convicted of child sexual or physical abuse, any crime against a child, or domestic violence will be rejected as a worker with children and youth. In this event or in the event a person is rejected for any reason, the persons responsible for making the decision should handle it in a sensitive manner and should inform the applicant in person.
5. All records, including criminal background check and application forms, will be kept in a locked cabinet with access only to the clergy and to persons designated by the Response Team, or as stated in the Waynesville District and the Western North Carolina Conference policies regarding the storing of confidential information gathered about applicants during the application process.
6. Applicants will not be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, sex, age, ethnic origin, or disability.

### Basic Operating Procedures

1. **Implementation of policy for recruiting, screening, hiring, and training children/youth Paid Staff Persons and Screened Adult Volunteers:** Criminal background checks, as well as previous employment history and all references, must be checked for those in supervisory capacities. There must be a written record of all checks done by phone.
2. **Two-adult rule:** Two unrelated adults must be in the room or vehicle at all times. At least one of the two must be a Screened Adult. Exception: a responsible youth at least five years over the age of the oldest child/youth being supervised may take the place of one of the adults, as long as the adult present is a Screened Adult. This rule applies until all children/youth have left the premises/event. In a TRUE emergency in which an adult is left alone with a child, the door to the room MUST be left open or there must be CLEAR VISIBILITY through a window in the door.
3. **Age limits:** No one under the age of 18 may be given supervisory capacity. In addition, Paid Staff Persons and Volunteers should be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth being supervised.
4. **Visibility in rooms:** Every room that is used for activities and teaching of children/youth should have a window in the door, or have an open half-door, that gives visibility to all areas of that room. The window must be left uncovered. If there is no window, the door must be left open at all times. There should be no locks on classroom doors.

5. **Disciplinary methods:** Corporal punishment is not to be used at any time. If a child/youth is in need of correction during an event, the following methods may be used, attempting to match severity of consequence to severity of infraction: 1) verbal correction which addresses the specific issue, while not berating the child/youth; 2) brief time-out: if child/youth must be removed from the room, he or she must be within sight of the adults; 3) calling the parent(s) to come get the child/youth. This should be used only in extreme circumstances.
6. **Open door counseling:** (a) Counseling, including pastoral counseling, is expected to be confidential in nature, but for the protection of both parties, such sessions should take place where other people are nearby even though not within hearing distance. The pastor's study should have a window in the door. (b) A Paid Staff Person may counsel one-on-one with a child/youth with the knowledge of at least one other paid staff member. The door must remain open and there must be another adult nearby in the building. (c) Appropriate referral will be made as needed to meet the child/youth's needs.
7. **Roving monitors:** In the event two adults are not available to be in the classroom, a roving monitor must be available during the meeting time, and the door must be left open.
8. **Restroom policy:** No child/youth shall be alone with an adult in the restroom. If one adult must leave the classroom/activity to take a child to the restroom, the adult shall wait outside the restroom door. In the case of young children who need assistance, the restroom door must be left open within sight of the second adult.
9. **First Aid and CPR:** At least one adult present at every church activity involving children/youth should be certified in basic first aid and CPR. The church should offer training annually.
10. **Communication/Advance Notice to Parents/Guardians:** Parents/guardians should be kept informed about programs their children/youth are involved in and should be given advance notice and information about any activity which deviates from the regular programs the church offers. Photocopies of permission forms with medical information/treatment release and with behavior standards should accompany children/youth on any activity involving travel or extreme sports activity (skiing, amusement parks, etc.). Copies of "Safe Sanctuary Child/Youth Protection Policy" will be made available to parents/guardians.
11. **Age and activity-appropriate equipment:** Annually examine the safety and appropriateness of the equipment used in nursery, classrooms, youth room, playground. Note in writing date and findings of inspection.
12. **Use of pictures:** pictures of children/youth may not be posted on any website without written permission of the parents. People in pictures on websites are never to be identified by name. Group pictures may be sent to other publications, but no identification of children/youth may be made without written permission from the parent/guardian.
13. **Sign-in and sign-out for children:** Adults supervising children through Grade 5 may not release children to anyone except the parent/guardian following an activity, unless written permission is given by parent/guardian. If someone brings a child (through Grade 5) who is unknown to the leaders, identifying information (address, phone, parents' names, where parents can be reached, etc.) must be gathered. For youth (Grade 6-12) who attend on a regular basis, a *Permission to Participate (Form SS-5)* should be acquired as soon as possible.
14. **Demonstration of affection:** Appropriate demonstrations of affection or physical contact: keep hugs brief; hug from the side; never impose touch on a child/youth.

15. **Dress code for child/youth workers:** clothing is expected to be modest and appropriate for a Christian event.
16. **Overnight trips:** **(a) housing arrangements:** Whenever possible, youth (ages 11-18) should be housed separately from adults, with adults preferably in an adjoining room. There will always be a minimum of two youth and one adult (all same sex) housed in the same room. No youth and adult will share a bed. In cases where beds must be shared, the youth will share a bed and the adults will share a bed (exception: mother/daughter or father/son may share a bed). Co-ed rooming is not permitted. Middle high youth should be housed separately from high school youth whenever possible. Children should not be housed with youth. Visitation between males and females in hotel rooms or residence halls is prohibited unless directly supervised in a group setting by the group's responsible adults for devotional or group discussion time. **(b) Inclusion of LGBTQIA+ youth:** Cullowhee UMC welcomes and affirms the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ youth. Adult leaders will communicate openly with transgender and gender-nonconforming youth to create a best housing solution that meets the youth's needs and desires. Some possible housing arrangements may include: housing that correlates with the youth's gender identity, housing that correlates with their biological sex, requesting a specific trusted roommate of choice, or single-room housing, if available. A private, all-gender restroom should also be made available, if able. **(c) Male/Female supervision:** at least one male Screened Adult must accompany male children/youth and at least one female Screened Adult must accompany female children/youth. (The Two-Adult Rule still applies). **(d)** Neither children/youth nor supervising adults may leave the event without explicit permission from the church group leader. **(e) Permission to Participate (Form SS-5)** must be used for overnight trips.
17. **Liability insurance coverage:** Maintain liability insurance coverage of at least \$1,000,000 per event/\$3,000,000 aggregate for activities both on and off church property. Liability insurance should include at least \$300,000 coverage for sexual misconduct claims.
18. **Transportation:** **(a)** Any vehicle transporting children/youth on behalf of the church must have two drivers, one of whom is a Screened Adult. The two adults should not be related unless the vehicle is traveling with two or more vehicles within sight of each other (even for short trips). **(b)** No one under the age of 18 may be a driver. **(c)** Drivers must carry personal liability insurance of at least \$50,000 bodily injury and \$100,000 per accident. A copy of the valid driver's license and of the face sheet of the insurance policy must be on file at the church. **(d)** Seat belts must be used for every passenger. The number of passengers cannot exceed the number of seat belts. State law must be followed in terms of age and weight-appropriate car seats for infants and children and in terms of age requirement for riding in the front seat. **(e)** When traveling in cars, the driver may be the only adult present as long as two or more vehicles travel together within sight of each other (even for short trips). However, no child/youth may travel alone with an adult unless it is his/her parent. **(e)** On out-of-town trips, at least one vehicle must have first aid supplies and a cell phone available. **(f) Permission to Participate (Form SS-5)** must be used for child/youth to be transported.
19. **Reporting of accidents/medical emergencies:** Any accident resulting in injury must be reported on the "Accident/Medical Emergency Report Form" and given to a Paid Staff Person. If that person is not the Pastor, the Paid Staff Person will give a report to the Pastor within 24 hours.
20. **Incident reporting and response procedure in case of allegation of abuse:** Reports of any type abuse or inappropriate behavior should never be taken lightly or disregarded. Such reports should be treated as confidential.
  - a. The first person to learn of the incident should not undertake an inquiry alone and should not question the accused or the accuser. The person should assure the immediate safety of the child/youth and promptly report the incident to the Staff-Parish Relations Committee if the accused is

a Paid Staff Person, and to a Paid Staff Person if the accused is a volunteer. If it is reported to a Paid Staff Person who is not the Pastor, the Paid Staff Person must report it to the Pastor within 24 hours. If the accused is hesitant to talk to “higher authorities,” the person receiving the report has a special responsibility to encourage willingness to speak to someone in authority, lest the church be unable to respond due to lack of firsthand information.

*Form SS2 – Policy and Procedure*

- b. The Response Team will consist of the Pastor, the Director of Children’s Ministries, a youth counselor, Chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee, and a member at large (preferably from the field of law, education, or medicine). A Coordinator of the Response Team will be elected by that group from the members of the Team.
  - c. The official receiving the initial incident report will promptly forward written copies of “Report of Suspected Incident of Child/Youth Abuse” to the Coordinator of the Response Team and the Pastor. The Chair of the Response Team is responsible to complete and keep current (in ink or typed) the remainder of the form, as well as a record of each step taken throughout to resolve the incident.
  - d. The records will be kept in a secure place: a doubly-locked place accessible to only the Chair of the Response Team and the Pastor if the accused is a volunteer; additionally to the Chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee if the accused is a Paid Staff Person. If any of the above is the accused, the records will be accessible to the other two of the three people listed above.
  - e. The Pastor or designated spokesperson will respond to any media inquiries. It is important that this person be the only person who speaks with the media about an incident.
  - f. The Response Team Coordinator and the Pastor will notify the parents/guardians of the alleged victim and law enforcement or child protective services. If one or both parents/guardians are the accused, the advice of the authorities will be followed.
  - g. The accused will be treated with dignity, but will be immediately removed from further involvement with children/youth until completely cleared.
  - h. If deemed appropriate by the Response Team, a brief statement can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim’s privacy or violating confidentiality.
  - i. The Response Team is NOT intended to advocate for any party; conduct a full-scale investigation; act as legal counsel, determine guilt or innocence; or replace the functions of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee or Book of Discipline (if the accused is a Paid Staff Person).
21. **Former abusers; former victims:** No adult who has been convicted of child abuse in any form should apply to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity. Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer to work with children/youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with the Pastor or a Paid Staff Member responsible for children or youth before accepting an assignment.
22. **Non-church-sponsored events involving children/youth:** Organizations (such as Boy Scouts of America) who use Cullowhee United Methodist Church facilities must sign a statement agreeing to adhere to Safe Sanctuaries Child/Youth Protection Policy. Individuals who supervise children/youth within those groups must have background checks (at their expense). Other non-organization groups (such as family reunions) must

be made aware of the *Safe Sanctuary Child/Youth Protection Policy* and must sign a statement agreeing to use the facilities at their own risk.

*Form SS2 – Policy and Procedure*