

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

I. Statement of Covenant and Policy

As a Christian community of faith, Central United Methodist Church, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children, youth and vulnerable adults as well as those who serve in ministry with and to them. As such:

- We will follow reasonable safety measures in the screening and selection of leadership, both paid and volunteer.
- We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs, events and ministries.
- We will educate all our leadership—both paid and volunteer—with children, youth and vulnerable adults regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods.
- We will have a clearly defined procedure to reporting an observed or suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law, and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Nothing in this policy or procedure is designed to hinder or prevent the investigation of suspected, reported or confirmed violations of any North Carolina criminal laws.

II. Theological Rationale

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child, welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5). He also said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to those who cannot protect themselves. We affirm this responsibility at each person's baptism by our congregational response, pledging: "With God's help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this person, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (Book of Worship, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge, 11).

III. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, we will use the following terms:

- Child or youth: Any person under the age of 18
- Adult: Any person 18 years old or older
- Vulnerable adult: Any person 18 years or older who is in need of special care, support or protection due to diminished physical, mental or emotional capacities or at risk of abuse due to the power dynamics of the situation (e.g. mission work or visitation ministries)
- Leader: Any adult—paid or volunteer—who has supervision or management responsibilities for the event, program or ministry

IV. Scope

This policy shall apply to all activities sponsored by Central United Methodist Church, regardless of location, as well as any activities utilizing its facilities.

Outside groups utilizing the church's facilities shall be required to adhere to this policy or adopt and adhere to equivalent policies. Where the two policies are in conflict, the more conservative approach shall be taken.

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

V. Policy

a. Liability Insurance

The church shall have adequate liability insurance for all ministries, including sexual abuse or misconduct coverage.

b. Screening and Selection

All persons (employees and volunteers) serving in leadership with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall be:

- An active member of the local ministry for at least six months
- At least 18 years of age
- At least five years older than the oldest person they are supervising/leading (Exception: This does not apply to adults in ministry with vulnerable adults.)

As part of the selection process, applicants must:

- Submit an application and personal references (See addendum 1 – Volunteer Interest Form)
- Participate in an interview process as determined by Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.
- Consent to a National Criminal Background Check (NCBC)

Employees, full-time or part-time shall have a NCBC before being offered employment at Central United Methodist Church. The results of the background check shall be sent to the chair of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee by United States Postal Service (USPS) or email as directed by the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. This information will become a part of the administrative file at the church. All employees will be placed on a daily monitoring program to notify the church if an employee develops a criminal issue. All employees shall have a NCBC every 5 years.

Volunteers, 18 years of age and older, shall submit to NCBC. These records will be conducted by an agency contracted by the Safe Sanctuary Committee. The company contracted will provide only a list of those individuals that meet the criteria set forth for volunteers at CUMC on an APPROVED LIST OF VOLUNTEERS. If an individual does not meet the criteria, the company contracted will notify the individual that they do not meet the requirements. The individual may withdraw his/her name from consideration as a volunteer or choose to meet with the Safe Sanctuary Committee to appeal the interpretation of the contracted company not to place the individual on the APPROVED LIST OF VOLUNTEERS. All volunteers shall have a NCBC every 5 years.

Employees of the Child Care Center will have their original background check performed by the State of North Carolina as required by the State. The State also requires the Child Care Center employees to have a state criminal record check every 5 years. All records of the employees of the Child Care Center shall be part of the administrative file for that employee and maintained in the Child Care Center. In addition, all employees of the Child Care Center shall be placed on the monitoring program. Any and all volunteers with the child care center shall have the same background checks and expectations as any other volunteer with the church.

Any conviction involving abuse of or harm toward children, youth or vulnerable adults will disqualify the applicant from participating in ministries with children, youth or vulnerable adults. All other convictions will be reviewed by Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee in order to ensure the safety of all involved.

All documentation collected as part of the application and screening process shall be maintained in a permanent secure file accessible only to the Church Administrator.

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

c. Youth helpers

Youth helpers are considered children or youth under the age of 18 who assist with ministries (e.g. Vacation Bible School).

Youth helpers shall follow all of the same guidelines as adult leaders. Youth helpers shall never be alone with children without an adult present.

d. Training

All leaders shall be trained annually in the practices of Safe Sanctuaries and a record of attendees shall be kept on file for a minimum of seven years.

Local church staff or lay leadership may facilitate Safe Sanctuaries at the local church level. However, it is expected that at least once every four years that the church utilizes conference leadership to be updated on new and emerging trends in Safe Sanctuaries.

The church community shall be informed of the Safe Sanctuaries policy and how the church is working to prevent abuse. The church community shall also be notified in advance of Safe Sanctuaries training opportunities.

Training may be offered to the following:

- Any leader of church-sponsored ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults
- Any leader of outside groups that utilize the church facilities for activities with children, youth or vulnerable adults
- Any person in the community who would like to learn more about Safe Sanctuaries and its ministry of abuse prevention

The training shall include information, explanation and discussion of the following:

- Local church policy and operational procedures
- Appropriate boundary guidelines
- Appropriate playground/recreational supervision
- Behaviors or other indicators which may signal concerns or abuse
- Requirements of North Carolina law for reporting incidents of abuse
- Procedures for reporting observed or suspected incidents or abuse

e. Activity Procedures

All activities involving children, youth or vulnerable adults shall adhere to the following minimum requirements: While the following are the basic procedures to insure a safe physical and emotional environment, common sense and the following state and local laws and codes will need to apply to hazardous or emergency situations.

Supervision and Conduct:

- All teachers, leaders and those who supervise directly or indirectly, children and youth will be required to attend an orientation and training session. At this session they will be informed of the policies and procedures. Annually, a worker or volunteer will be required to renew a covenant to uphold these policies.

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

- Over 18; Five years older: All teachers, leaders, and those who supervise directly, or indirectly, children and youth are to be at least 18 years of age and five years older than those being supervised. This policy does not prohibit adults who are less than five years older than the children/youth in an activity from participating as a supervised assistant.
- Six-month rule: All adult volunteers supervising children/youth **in church programs** shall be required to be a church member or in attendance, and in good standing for at least 6 months. **This rule does not apply to Boy Scout or Girl Scout leaders. Those leaders shall meet the standards for leaders as required by those respective groups.**
- Rule of Two: A minimum of two unrelated adults should be present for any church sponsored program or event including children/youth. If the "rule of two" is not possible, the door to the classroom must remain open and the roamer rule should be followed.
- Roamer Rule: In the event there are not two adults in the classroom, there must be a designated "roamer" to make unscheduled visits to check on all classrooms or areas. Roamers must be at least 21 years of age.
- All employees and as many volunteers as practical should be trained in first aid and CPR.
- There shall be at least one adult present at all activities who is trained in first aid and CPR. First aid kits shall be readily available in the kitchen, office, Christian Education Director's Office, nursery, Youth Room, Child Care Center downstairs and Child Care Center upstairs. There shall be a roving monitor during high-volume ministry and class times (e.g. Sunday School).
- At no time shall windows be obscured or doors locked to areas where children, youth or vulnerable adults are meeting.
- (Exception: Active shooter drills or incidents.)
- All leaders assisting with diaper changing, toileting and clothes changes of young children or of children, youth or adults with special needs shall follow [guidelines as set forth in training].
- All leaders supervising or assisting with recreational or playground activities shall follow the rules of age and activity appropriate equipment. The Board of Trustees will monitor the safety and appropriateness of equipment used in the nursery, Child Care Center, classrooms and playground.
- Restrooms: It is strongly encouraged that a parent or guardian accompanies any child/youth to the restroom.
- Building Accessibility and Security: During worship and other planned activities, all outside doors with the exception of monitored doors will be locked. Designated roamers will monitor the parking lots, all entrances and the building periodically during the main worship.
- Acolyte and Crucifer Policy—Acolytes and Crucifers in third grade or above will participate in structured training sessions, either in group settings or individually with parental supervision, facilitated by the Director of Children's Ministries or Worship Committee Chair. All acolyte instruction adheres to the Safe Sanctuary framework to ensure a secure environment for all young or new participants.
 - Youth are required to arrive 15 minutes prior to worship services or special events. Upon arrival, participants must check in promptly, dress in appropriate robes and accessories and proceed to the rear of the church to prepare for worship with the processional cross and candlelighters. An adult—either the director, an usher, or a parent—will light the candlelighters before acolytes enter the worship space.

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

- Following the lighting of the candles, participants are expected to carefully remove and hang up their robes before returning to the congregation. Just before the conclusion of the service, they will once again put on their robes and move to the Chancel area to extinguish the candles, formally closing the service. All participants, including acolytes and crucifers, are required to handle the candlelighters and cross responsibly and comply with the directions provided by the director, usher, or parent. In accordance with Safe Sanctuary policy, the Sacristy door—where robes are stored—must remain open at all times.
- All leaders shall follow appropriate boundary guidelines [as set forth in training]. For example:
 - Appropriate boundary setting for all leaders engaging in ministry with vulnerable adults
 - Appropriate boundary setting for youth leaders, especially focused on small group ministry, overnight retreats and transportation to and from activities
 - Appropriate boundary setting for clergy and leaders regarding counseling and confidentiality

f. Individual counseling

Sometimes one-on-one interactions are necessary, specifically in reference to counseling. These interactions must be conducted in an appropriate manner.

The clergy person, staff person, or lay leader shall conduct the meeting in a visible space, meaning that the office door is cracked open or a window is visible and someone can reasonably see all persons in the room, or the meeting shall take place in a public place.

Suspected abuse or neglect uncovered in counseling shall be reported in accordance with North Carolina law. (See Addendum #2 – Incident Report Form)

g. Internet and Social Media

Images and names of children, youth and vulnerable adults shall not be utilized on any website or application without explicit consent.

A social media covenant shall be adopted and adhered to by all participants and leaders. This covenant shall be kept on file as an addendum to this policy. At a minimum, this covenant shall include:

- Leaders shall never initiate a social media connection (friend, follower, link, etc.)
- Boundaries regarding calling, texting and private messaging
- Boundaries regarding taking and distributing photos and videos
- Boundaries regarding social media posts

h. Transportation

Any person driving a church-owned vehicle or driving a personal vehicle on behalf of the church must consent to a motor vehicle record check and provide proof of current insurance coverage.

When using charter buses or other contracted drivers, the carrier must provide certification that the driver has completed a recent background check.

All vehicle use requirements set forth by the Board of Trustees shall be followed.

i. Off-Site and Overnight Events

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

All requirements from section 3C: Activity Procedures shall be adhered to.

Adults and children or youth who are unrelated shall not share beds.

Leaders must obtain medical information and liability release forms for all participants and keep those records on hand throughout the off-site activity or overnight event.

Leaders shall provide parents or guardians with specific information regarding the schedule, sleeping arrangements, leader-to-participant ratios and emergency contact information. (See Addendum #3 – Off Site Registration and Release Form)

j. Missionaries

When engaging in mission work—whether domestically or globally—missionaries are intrinsically put in a place of power over the persons they serve. Due to these power dynamics, all persons participating in mission work shall follow the screening, selection, training, activity, counseling, transportation, and off-site/overnight event regulations as set forth above.

k. Daycare/Preschool Requirements

In addition to the requirements set forth in this policy, the church's daycare program shall also adhere to relevant requirements established by the state of North Carolina. Where the two requirements are in conflict, the more conservative approach shall be taken.

VI. Reporting and Response

a. Documentation and Reporting

All incidents—including accidents and suspected abuse—shall be documented in writing on the CUMC Incident Report Form and kept on file. The form is available [physical and/or virtual location(s)]. (See Addendum #2 – Incident Report Form)

In the event of an accident or injury, one copy of the Incident Report Addendum shall be given to the parent or guardian of the affected child, youth or vulnerable adult.

In the event that an allegation of abuse or misconduct is made against a volunteer or lay leader, a report shall be made to the ministry area leader who shall report it to the Senior Pastor.

In the event that an allegation of abuse is made against a clergy member or staff person, a report shall be made to the chairperson of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.

b. Mandatory State Reporting

All reporting of alleged or actual incidents of child or vulnerable adult abuse must strictly follow North Carolina law. Although there is no obligation for private citizens to report evidence of a most crimes, North Carolina citizens have a legal duty to report in the following situations:

- Suspected child abuse or neglect by a parent, guardian or caretaker NC G.S. 7B-301(a)
- Suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of a vulnerable adult by their caretaker NC G.S. 108A-2

A leader who has reasonable cause to suspect that abuse has occurred should secure the safety of the child, youth or vulnerable adult (if possible) and then immediately report the incident to appropriate law enforcement.

It is never the responsibility of a leader to investigate allegations of abuse.

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

c. Response

All allegations shall be taken seriously.

A quick, compassionate, and unified response to an alleged incident of child or adult abuse will be initiated following the direction of the appointed clergy in the local church and in consultation with the District Superintendent of the district in which the church is located.

In the case that the alleged incident involves the appointed clergy, the response will be directed by the District Superintendent of the district in which the church is located.

A response will include appropriate pastoral care and support for all involved in the allegation, including the alleged perpetrator(s), alleged victim(s) and their families.

m. Interaction with the Media

In the event that an incident receives media attention, the only persons authorized to speak to the media are the Senior Pastor and District Superintendent.

If approached by the media, all others should not comment and instead endeavor to help the media find the authorized spokesperson(s).

VII. Policy Review

A team comprised of representatives of age-level ministries, the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, Board of Trustees, and Finance Committee, as well as others whom they invite to participate in the team's work, shall be responsible for reviewing this policy on an annual basis for relevance and adherence to requirements established by the Western North Carolina Conference.

VIII. Conclusion

In all ministries, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person 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 of the UMC Baptismal Covenant 11*)

Adopted October 28, 2025

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY AND PROCEDURE AMENDMENT:

This policy shall be reviewed annually and may be amended at any time by the Church Council of Central United Methodist Church.

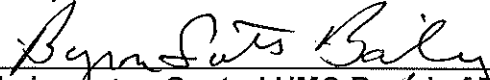
Authorization: This policy is authorized by the Central UMC Church Council, including the Staff Pastor Parish Committee and Board of Trustees and Safe Sanctuary Committee. This authorization will remain in effect even though incumbents will change.



Chairperson Central UMC Church Council

10/27/25

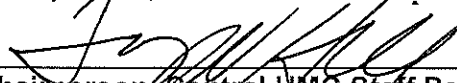
Date



Chairperson, Central UMC Board of Trustees

10/27/25

Date



Chairperson, Central UMC Staff Parish Relations Committee

10/27/25

Date



Chairperson, Central UMC Safe Sanctuary Committee

10/27/25

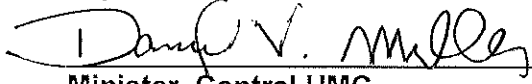
Date



Lay Leader, Central UMC

10/27/25

Date



Minister, Central UMC

10/27/25

Date