



Safe Sanctuaries Policy/Guidelines

PURPOSE

Catawba UMC's purpose for establishing the following Safe Sanctuaries Policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety and well-being of all children and youth involved in any Catawba United Methodist Church or Catawba UMC-affiliated group event/gathering/activity or is on Catawba UMC premises by consent. Our Safe Sanctuaries Policy seeks to reduce the potential for:

- child abuse (which includes but is not limited to: physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, ritual abuse, and sexual abuse);
- accusations, implications, or suspicion against any/all church employees/leaders/volunteers;
- devastation to the reputations of Catawba UMC and the God we represent.

GENERAL POLICY

Age Requirements: Volunteers and staff must be at least 18 years Old and must be 5 years older than the age of persons that they will be working to serve. Adults may not leave children alone with persons not meeting this requirement. However, when approved adult volunteers are unavailable, approved underage volunteers may fill this role provided there is an adult volunteer or the child/children's parent/guardian within a distance of accessibility.

Supervision: A minimum of two adults is required for all close-quarter programming with children and youth. Other ratios may apply in accordance with the Conference Policy. Where it is impossible to staff two adults in every room, we will either have an additional adult serve as a floater or allow the approved under volunteer as listed above. The floater will have visual and physical access to all areas (either requiring doors to be open or having prominent windows in the doors).

Six Month Rule: Volunteers must be active at Catawba United Methodist Church for six months before they can serve in the children and youth ministries. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve as assistants to another approved adult.

Background Check: Employees and volunteers who are involved with church ministries and activities that intentionally serve those under the age of 18 will undergo a background check. (Any cost incurred will be paid by the church.)

Lodging: Children or youth will room together without an adult. In situations where adults must room with youth or children in a hotel, cabin, tent, or othersimilar situation, there must be two adults. The adults must be the same sex as the children or youth. Adults cannot sleep in the same bed with children or youth unless they are the parent or guardian of that child.

Transportation for Church-Organized Events: Van or bus drivers must be at least 21 years old and have an approved Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) on file. (Any cost incurred will be paid by the church.) Drivers are to insure that passengers are buckled and are in the appropriate child safety seats, if required and furnished by the parents. The two-adult rule applies — and always have more than one child. Exceptions are allowed for emergencies. Drivers must also immediately report any accidents and fill out appropriate reports.

On-campus nighttime activities including evening programs: A parent or guardian must pick up children in the 5th grade or younger. Exceptions may be decided on an as-needed basis.

Open Door Rule: All counseling sessions with children and youth shall take place in offices with windows or else the door shall remain open while the office is in use.

Reporting Abuse: Volunteers who work with children under the age of 18 must report any type of suspected child abuse according to policy. Workers shall report incidents of child abuse or reasonably suspected cases of abuse, whether allegedly perpetrated by individuals associated with the church or outside of the church, to the Pastor. In the event of the Pastor's absence or alleged involvement, then report allegations directly to the police.

Scheduled Events or Programs: Two adults must be present for scheduled events or programs. An adult or guardian at least 18 years of age must accompany children under the age of 12.

Training: Safe Sanctuary policies will be reviewed, and training will be offered annually by Catwaba UMC or as necessary for new members who wish to volunteer. To maintain certification, you must take safe sanctuaries training when the WNCC updates its safe sanctuaries policy or every five years, whichever comes first.

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1. Any/all communications through any/all church and church-related communications outlets should not disclose information of a personal or confidential nature without first obtaining express written consent from those about whom the sensitive information pertains. This might include/but is not limited to information pertaining to financial, medical, and/or personal matters, etc.
 - a) All those tasked with communicating through any/all church and/or church-related communications outlets must respect the privacy of others. When communicating through any/all outlets, you must not reveal personally identifiable, private or confidential information, such as the home address or telephone number, of themselves or fellow Church Members unless first obtaining express written consent. In addition, you also may not forward or post personal communications without the authors prior consent.
2. Refrain from posting photos of and adult or minor — or identifying any adult or minor — on any/all communications outlets without prior written consent.
 - a) For minors, written consent must be given by a primary guardian of said child/youth by signing a Catawba UMC permission slip (Please see the sample permission slip at bottom of guidelines).
 - b) Administrators of Social Media Sites are responsible for disabling the “tagging” of individuals in photos posted on the ministry’s page. If the photos include location information, this information is to be removed as well.
 - c) When grouping “staged” photos, you must state that the photo may appear on Social Media and that if a person does not wish to participate in said photo, they have the option to remove themselves.
3. If you are an administrator for any church or church-affiliated social media site or website, routinely monitor the communications at least once per week, removing content that is obscene, embarrassing, abusive, or otherwise objectionable. If any material appears to be illegal, immoral or offensive (example: child or elder abuse, etc.), Administrators of those sites should contact the Pastor and Church Office immediately. Do not attempt to engage. Protocol has been set within the Church Office to handle these situations in an “official church capacity”. Whenever possible, screenshots and the name of person(s) responsible should be submitted.
4. When communicating with children and youth via social media, employees and volunteers should always do so in a group chat/page. Never communicate individually with children or youth online via email or social media sites.
 - a) If a child/youth initiates a conversation through social media or email to a church or church-affiliated group leader about a sensitive subject that the child would like to keep confidential, then the leader must not respond via email or social media, but ask a primary guardian of said child/youth for permission to meet in a safe-sanctuaries approved location to continue the conversation.
5. Ministry workers and volunteers who serve in children and youth ministries should keep their professional image in mind. Online conduct and behavior affects this image. Catawba United Methodist Church highly discourages staff members and volunteers from accepting/sending

invitations to “friend request” youth members within personal social networking sites unless the church representative is also a “friend” of a primary guardian on the same site or has been given express written consent by a primary guardian. Even then, when communicating with children and youth, please refer to guideline #4 and #4a.

6. Please keep in mind that we are representatives of the Triune God and Catawba UMC when publishing communications through personal outlets as well as church and church-affiliated communications outlets. Remember, there’s no delete button that can make a misguided post disappear forever. Therefore, before publishing any communication through any outlet, it is important to T.H.I.N.K. before you post:

T – Is it **T** rue?

H – Is it **H** elpful?

I – Is it **I** nspiring?

N – Is it **N** ecessary?

K – Is it **K** ind?

- a) For this reason, we ask that you conduct your online interactions in accordance with the UMC Book of Discipline (2016 Edition *162T* within *Section 162 III Social Community*).

NURSERY POLICY

1. There must be at least **2 approved/assigned nursery workers/volunteers** in the nursery when a child/children are present. Assigned volunteers and nursery workers are allowed to be under the age of 18. However, to comply with safe sanctuary policy, when only 2 approved workers are assigned to the nursery one adult nursery worker/volunteer cannot be paired with one nursery worker who is under the age of 18. In other words if an approved nursery worker who is under the age of 18 has been assigned to work in the nursery, then the other approved nursery worker must also be under the age of 18.
2. Only scheduled nursery workers, parents/guardians, and their children should be in the nursery area.
3. Children will be released to their parents/guardians or to the adult who dropped them off.
4. The Nursery Coordinator/ Sunday School Superintendent is responsible for scheduling and supervising the nursery workers and assigned/approved nursery volunteers for both the Sunday School hour and the Second Worship Service. The Nursery Coordinator/Sunday School Superintendent as well as all nursery workers and assigned nursery volunteers must submit to a background check at the church’s expense.
5. All nursery workers, youth volunteers, Sunday school workers, and assigned/approved nursery volunteers will follow the safe sanctuary guidelines.