

SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY
NASHVILLE METHODIST CHURCH
Heritage District of the North Carolina Conference
Nashville, North Carolina

I. Introduction:

Nashville Methodist Church, (hereafter known as NMC) is called upon to welcome and nurture children, youth and vulnerable adults in the Christian faith. The Global Methodist Church is committed to providing an environment in which they feel secure and unthreatened from physical and emotional abuse. Therefore, in covenant with the Global Methodist Church, we adopt this policy and its accompanying procedures for the prevention of abuse of children and youth in the North Carolina Conference of the Global Methodist Church.

A. Theological Foundation: In 1996, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution designed to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. This resolution contains the following statement:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes [a] child...welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus 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 the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse” (§ 162C).

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse occur in churches both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real and appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members’ adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church – 2000*, pp.180-181.)

Thus, in covenant with the General Conference of the United Methodist Church, NUMC adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

B. Statement of Commitment: The North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church is committed to conducting our ministry so that children, youth

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and adults will be safe to grow spiritually. We further commit 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” (Baptismal covenant II, *United Methodist Hymnal*, p.44). We strive to fulfill this commitment to prevent abuse and neglect of our children, youth and vulnerable adults in programs of both the Conference and its local churches through preventive measures, reporting, education and training.

- C. **Purpose:** The purpose of establishing this policy and the related procedures is to demonstrate our unwavering commitment to providing a place where children, youth, vulnerable adults, volunteers, and staff can be safe to grow in God, and become the people God intends them to be. As according to scripture (Matthew 19:24) we seek to establish a church that allows the children to come and not be hindered.
- D. **Application:** This policy applies to the adults who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults in ministries at and beyond the local church.

II. Definitions

Child Abuse: NMC will not tolerate child abuse in any of its many forms. NMC defines child abuse as any act that is committed by a person in a position of trust that harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical, spiritual, emotional or mental health.

Main Categories of Abuse:

- A. Physical Abuse: Inflicting bodily harm to a minor is considered physical abuse. These types of bodily harm consist of, but are not limited to, assault with or without a weapon, burns, bruises, hitting, being thrown, fractures and breakage of a bone, being pushed down, shaken, and any form of bullying. NMC recognizes that physical abuse does not always leave visible marks.
- B. Sexual Abuse: Any sexual contact including, but not limited to, sexual contact prohibited by the NC General Statutes, involving any members of the programs to wit; volunteers, minors, and/or adults. This includes, but not limited to sexual stimulation of a minor by an adult or older minor or, sexual stimulation of an adult or older minor by a minor is considered sexual abuse. The minor is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. This also includes fondling, sexual intercourse, participation in sexual acts, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution and/or exposure to adult sexual activity.

- C. Emotional Abuse: When a minor is verbally, mentally, or emotionally assaulted or exposed to cruel remarks. This type of abuse includes but is not limited to a minor being confined to a small space, the making of racial remarks, excessive punishment, using profanity around children, allowing drug or alcohol use, ignoring or encouraging peer abuse.

III. Standards

A. Reporting Abuse

Any person 18 years of age or older who knows or should have reasonably known that a juvenile has been or is the victim of a violent offense, sexual offense, or misdemeanor child abuse under G.S. 14-318.6 shall immediately report the case of that juvenile to the appropriate local law enforcement agency in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be made orally or by telephone. NMC also requires notification to either the Senior Pastor, Pastor of Discipleship or Safe Sanctuaries Chair. They in turn will notify the NUMC Media Spokesperson.

B. Two Adult Rule

Every effort will be made that during any church related event or program where one or more children are present a minimum of two adults should be present. The two adults should not be husband and wife or parent and child unless; there is a 3rd non-related adult present.

C. Minimum Age

Assistants are defined as anyone under the age of 18 who is working with children. NMC will allow assistants to work with volunteers as long as all of the following criteria are met.

- a) A minimum 6th grade level in school
- b) Level of maturity that is deemed appropriate by volunteers
- c) Approved by the Senior Pastor or the person he designates.

Assistants are NOT allowed to be alone with a child, at any time, to include taking the child to the restroom. Assistants are to assist the leader but never be left in charge of the group.

The Senior Pastor and/or the person designated by the Senior Pastor are given the right to refuse any assistant from helping as long as he or she has reasonable cause to do so.

Middle School or High School leaders must be at least the age of 25 to be a leader in the group, anyone under the age of 25 needs to have special approval by Safe Sanctuaries Task Force or a NMC Pastor.

D. Child-Teacher Ratio

For King's Kids, Children's Church, Play Practice, and any church related event involving children, NUMC adheres to the following North Carolina State Codes:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Teacher: Child Ratio</u>
0-12 Months	1:5
12-24 Months	1:6
2 years old	1:10
3 years old	1:15
4 years old	1:20
School age	1:25

These are the preferred ratios and every effort will be made to follow them

E. Volunteer Covenant

Any adult seeking to volunteer with NMC Children and Youth must fill out an official NMC Volunteer Covenant. These covenants are to be respected and kept completely confidential. The application will be kept current for the span of one (1) year and then filed and kept on record for a span of five (5) years.

F. Six-Month Rule

No volunteer will be allowed to work with children in any capacity until they have been an active and participating attendee of the church for a minimum of six (6) months (active and participating in approximately 75% of weekly worship, availing themselves of the means of grace, and loving God and loving neighbor). The purpose of this span is to allow the potential volunteer to become acquainted with the church and the church staff and volunteers to become acquainted with the potential volunteer.

This six-month rule may be waived with the recommendation of the Senior Pastor and approval by the Safe Sanctuaries Team.

G. Background Check

All volunteers, working with children or youth or vulnerable adults, must submit to a background check before working with children or youth in any capacity.

If any background check comes back to the church flagged for further review, the SSTF Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) will be notified by the Administrative Assistant for Discipleship. The LEO and a NMC Pastor will review and discuss the background. They will jointly decide how to proceed with the volunteer.

NUMC reserves the right to perform a background check on any volunteer of NUMC at any time while he or she is volunteering or working with the church. This information will be made available to the volunteer

H. Safety Drills

1. Fire Drill

All NMC related children or youth ministries must participate in a Fire Drill one (1) time each year.

2. Tornado Drill

All NMC related children or youth ministries must participate in a Tornado Drill one (1) time each year.

3. Live Shooter/Lockdown

All NMC related programs should follow the Live Shooter/Lockdown Drill as implemented by the Safe Sanctuaries Task Force.

Preparation of these drills will be created by an NC Emergency Management Personnel and Law Enforcement Officers.

I. Safe Sanctuaries Task Force

NMC has formed Safe Sanctuaries Task Force to guide the church efforts in protecting our children, youth and vulnerable adults. The task force is made up of the following people.

Senior Pastor	Pastor of Discipleship
Children's Pastor	Youth Pastor
SPRC Member	Member of Trustees
Sunday School Director	Weekday School Director
Nursery Coordinator	Leader of NMC Security
Youth Program Parent	Children's Ministry Parent

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Law Enforcement Officer

Attorney/Press Officer

J. Identification Badges

All volunteers and assistants with NMC should wear a nametag when working with children and youth. This badge will be provided by NMC.

K. Entrances to the Church

During Sunday Night Ministries at the Church, only the Hilliard Street Entrance should be unlocked, the Collins Street entrances will remain locked during the event, unless a special event calls for multiple entrances to be open. All entrances, however, should be stationed with a Security Team person.

L. Sign In Forms

To reduce the risk of kidnapping, all children (Birth-3rd Grade) must be signed in by a parent or guardian with the respected volunteer. Teachers or Leaders of 4th Grade –High School should record who is present for each event. The same parent or guardian must sign his or her child out, unless otherwise noted by the parent or guardian. In this case only the person designated by the parent or guardian will be authorized to pick up the child. Once the child has been signed out, that child is no longer under the responsibility of NMC Staff or volunteers.

M. Rooming and Boarding for Overnight Events

NMC does not allow a non-married male and female to sleep in the same room during a church affiliated event.

In the event of youth or children overnight event at a hotel, no adult may sleep in the same room as a youth or child unless it is a child and their parent or legal guardian.

In the event of a youth or children overnight event at a camp or mission trip setting, two (2) or more adults may sleep in the same room as youth and children, however, never in the same bed.

N. Safe Sanctuaries Training

Any person seeking to work with children or youth in any capacity should follow the Covenant Process of the Children and Youth Ministries.

All persons must also take the NMC Safe Sanctuaries Training course. The course will be offered multiple times throughout the year. Every volunteer must take the Safe Sanctuaries training annually.

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The first Safe Sanctuaries class MUST be in person to allow for a clear understanding and questions. Annual classes may be taken in person or renewal may be done by getting with your area leader (Youth, Children, Weekday School, ASP, etc.) and reviewing the Safe Sanctuaries policy, PowerPoint and taking a 10-question test. When complete the leader will have you fill out the Covenant form and Background form.

O. Incidents and the Media

In the event of an accident on church grounds or at church related event all persons should refrain from speaking to the media. This matter will be handled by the Safe Sanctuaries Team Media Spokesperson.

P. Childcare for Special Events

Any event that is not regular or reoccurring at NMC that seeks NMC provided Childcare should have approval of the Nursery Director. An official reservation must also be submitted through the NMC Church Office.

Q. Qualifications for Leadership

As approved by Church Council, all persons seeking to volunteer with NUMC should adhere to the “Scripturally-Based Qualifications for Leadership” which comes from Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3.

If the Senior Pastor, Discipleship Pastor, or Safe Sanctuaries Task Team believes a leader is not modeling a Christ like lifestyle in word and deed, these people reserve the right to ask the leader to step down and focus on growing in discipleship.

R. Training for Volunteers

NMC encourages volunteers to take a First Aid/CPR class. The church will offer these periodically.

IV. Vulnerable Adults

While much of this policy addresses the need to protect our children and youth, NUMC recognizes that abuse of impaired and older adults is a major concern. Many older adults are also subject to financial abuse. We must be vigilant for signs of abuse in our adult membership and report any suspected abuse, following the process outlined above. The local Department of Family and Services has a division that looks over the supervision of elder care.