Horne Memorial United Methodist Church
Safe Sanctuary Policy
Revised and approved by Church Council on September 17, 2026

God calls us to make our church a safe place, and to protect children, youth, and other vulnerable persons from physical, emotional, sexual, ritual abuse and neglect. As a member of the United Methodist Church, we are a nurturing community and maintain that abusive expressions damage the humanity that God has given us as a birthright, and we affirm only interpersonal expression that enhances that same humanity.

**Scriptural and Doctrinal Context**

- "In the same way, it is not my heavenly Father's will that even one of these little ones should perish" – Matthew 18:14
- "Children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse" Paragraph 162C – Methodist Social Principles 2004 Book of Discipline
- "With God's help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal." – Baptismal Covenant II page 44, United Methodist Hymnal

**Mandate**

The North Carolina Conference passed a motion in June 2005 that each local church should develop its own Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures. The Horne Memorial UMC policy includes the following safeguards:

- comprehensive screening protocol of any person responsible for ministry for vulnerable persons;
- instruction regarding safety procedures for church activities;
- information on relevant legal requirements regulating abusive behavior;
- social agencies available to support victims, family members and perpetrators;
- responsibility for appropriate liability insurance;
- maintenance of an ongoing educational program providing awareness and self-protection skills for children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Review and knowledge of the Annual Conference misconduct policies available on the Conference Website (www.nccumc.org) is recommended.

**Purpose**

Horne Memorial United Methodist Church has as its purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuaries Policy with accompanying procedures, the demonstration of our absolute and unwavering commitment to the spiritual growth and physical safety of **all** within our church community.

**Statement of Covenant:**

As a Christian community and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in ways that ensure the spiritual growth and safety of all within our church community. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of staff, volunteers, and contractors involved in the ministries of our church. We will implement prudent operational procedures regarding all programs and events. We will educate all persons involved in ministry to children, youth and vulnerable adults, especially regarding the communication of clearly defined policies and methods (e. g. State Law) requiring the reporting of any incidence of alleged abusive behavior.

**Safe Sanctuary- Policy Definitions**

- "Adult" means a person 18 years of age or older.
- "Child abuse" is defined as a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child. Child abuse includes non-accidental:
    - Physical Abuse - Violent, non-accidental contact that results in injury. Examples of physical abuse include, but are not limited to: striking, biting, shaking, harmful restraint, use of a weapon or instrument, or actions that result in or could result in serious physical injury.
    - Sexual Abuse - any form of sexual activity with a child/youth/vulnerable person. The abuser may be an adult or a minor. This involves a range of activities, including fondling or other inappropriate physical contact. It also includes, without limitation, exhibitionism, child pornography, and suggestive behaviors or comments.
    - Emotional Abuse - a pattern of intentional conduct that crushes a child/youth/vulnerable person's spirit and attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.
    - Neglect -Child neglect can be defined as any serious disregard for a juvenile's supervision, care, or discipline.
    - Under North Carolina law, anyone who has cause to suspect that a child or youth has been abused or neglected is a mandated reporter of such abuse or neglect.
- "Child or youth" means any person under the age of 18.
- "Children's ministries" at Horne Memorial encompass infants through fifth grade.
- "Youth ministries" involve children in grades six through twelve.
- "Children's and youth activities" means any activity or program performed in connection with Horne Memorial UMC in which children are under supervision of persons (staff or volunteers) in charge of these activities.
- Vulnerable person: A person whose ability to protect himself/herself from violence, abuse, or neglect is significantly impaired through social, physical, or mental disability or illness.
- "Church" or "We" or "Horne Memorial" means the congregation of Horne Memorial United Methodist Church.
- "Conference" means the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church.
- "Staff person" means any person who is compensated by Horne Memorial.
- "Volunteer" means a non-staff person who leads or assists in a leadership or support role in ministries with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.
- The "Safe Sanctuaries Review Team" shall be comprised of representatives of the Staff-Parish committee and Board of Trustees, and the directors of preschool, children, youth and congregational care ministries.
- "Safe Sanctuaries Crisis Response Team" shall be comprised of the Senior Pastor, the chairpersons of the Staff-Parish committee and Trustees and outside consultants as necessary. On a case-by-case basis, the youth and/or children's programs directors may be members of this committee to assist in managing an incident. In no event shall a person alleged to be involved in a reported incident of abuse serve as a member of the Committee during the review process of such incident.
- "Outside Group" means any group that does not fall under the responsibility of Horne Memorial, its staff or congregation, and that has been approved to use Horne Memorial's facilities.

**Who May Work with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Persons?**

In order to provide as safe and secure an environment as possible for our ministry participants, and to minimize vulnerability to unwarranted accusation, the following procedures are enforced.

**Recruiting, Screening and Hiring Workers**

A. Paid Staff: The paid staff of Horne Memorial are subject to the policies adopted and implemented by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and to *The Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church:
    a. Horne Memorial Ministry Staff: Interviews and hiring are made by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and Pastor; evaluation is performed by the immediate supervisor as listed on the individual job descriptions.
    b. Horne Memorial Preschool: Interviews, hiring and evaluations will be made by the Preschool Director in conjunction with the Preschool Council.
    c. Church Nursery Staff: interviews, hiring and evaluation will be performed by the Children's Ministry Director.
    d. Contract Personnel, including custodial staff: interviews, hiring and evaluation will be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees.

B. Screening and Training:
    a. Volunteers will have evidence of gifts needed for the ministry position and will demonstrate personal integrity and Christian character.
    b. Potential volunteers will complete a criminal/sex offender background check authorization form (beginning at age 18). Prior checks performed for organizations other than the North Carolina Conference of the UMC are not sufficient.
    c. Any potential volunteer working with children, youth or vulnerable persons must be a member or regular attendee of Horne Memorial worship/ministry for a minimum of 6 months before having direct contact with children, youth or vulnerable persons.
    d. All information pertaining to criminal background and sex offender registry checks will be collected by the church business administrator or the age-level program director and will be reviewed by the director of the program for which the volunteer is applying. All information will be held in confidence by the person reviewing. Documentation is maintained online with our background check provider – Disa Healthcare Technology, dba Castle Branch.
    e. If a background check reveals a concern, it will be discussed with the applicant in confidence. If for any reason a person is deemed not suitable to work with children, youth or vulnerable persons at the discretion of the appropriate ministry program director, that person's application will be denied. This includes youth who are deemed not mature enough to be in a supervisory or assistance position.
    f. All volunteers and paid staff will complete a new background check authorization form every 3 years.
    g. All volunteers will receive training relating to the policies and procedures associated with the Horne Memorial Safe Sanctuaries Policy every three years or each time the Safe Sanctuaries Policy is changed.

**How Will Volunteers Be Utilized?**

- Ideally, 2 adults are present for each function and in each room or area (e.g., an area may be defined as 2 nursery rooms connected by an open bathroom) involving children, youth and vulnerable adult activities. An adult volunteer who moves in and out of rooms and monitors the hallways at all times during any function involving children and/or youth may be counted as one of the adults for purposes of this rule.

- Guidelines for youth and young adults volunteering for children and youth ministries:
    - 5-Year Rule: Any youth-age (grades 6-12) member must be at least 5 years older than the children with whom they are ministering in children's ministries.
    - Young adults (under the age of 25) may volunteer with children and youth. Those volunteering with youth are placed with those at least five years younger than they are for regular programming. On mission trips, young adults (under the age of 25) may work with youth closer than 5 years in age, but must be paired with another adult over the age of 25 for leadership.
    - Middle School Youth may volunteer as a helper of one of their parents.
    - Paid nursery workers must be at least 16 years old.
- All classrooms and offices will have windows or other provision for visibility and accountability so that there is no assumption of privacy in any space utilized.
- Spaces utilized for program ministries will be age appropriate so as to provide as much independence as possible and to keep participants safe. This includes appropriate seating, table height, and restroom availability.
- All Outside Groups (that do not have a Safe Sanctuary-type policy which is at least as stringent as the Church policy) using the facilities of Horne Memorial will be provided a copy of this policy and expected to abide by its applicable requirements.
- The Safe Sanctuaries policy of Horne Memorial will be reviewed annually by the Safe Sanctuaries Review Team, and the Congregation will be informed of any substantive changes thereto.
- The Youth Ministry Director and any other staff member engaged with youth will obtain written permission from a parent (using the form in this policy) before engaging in emails, texts, or any other electronic/social media communication with youth in Horne's Youth Program.

**Discipline and Restroom Procedures for Children:**

- Leaders are expected to use kind and age-appropriate language and to respect others (participant and leader alike).
- In children's ministry programming, verbal conversations are held with a child not meeting behavior expectations. If the verbal conversation does not enact change, the child will be removed from the situation – typically by having the child sit with the group leader. If the behavior does not improve, the Children's Director will be involved.
- At no time will a child or youth be removed from a room and be left alone as a behavior modification.
- Parents are asked to accompany their children to the restroom before the beginning of an activity.
- Children and youth should use the restroom closest to their classroom.
- When supervising a preschooler, the door should remain slightly open to reduce the feeling of privacy.
- Nursery age children practices for diaper changing are posted in the nursery and communicated with the parents.

**Additional Expectations of Volunteers with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Persons:**

- Maintain confidentiality.
- Report any indication of abuse, neglect or other condition which seems to put the recipient at risk to the paid ministry leader.
- Withdraw from any situation in which you feel uncomfortable and report your discomfort to the paid ministry leader.

**Transportation**

- Adults must be at least 25 years old in order to transport children or youth for an off-campus program. As volunteers, all drivers will have background checks and a driving record (history) check.
- There must be two (2) adults per vehicle when transporting children and youth.
- Local and Federal laws regarding seatbelts, car seats, booster seats, and placement of children will be followed.
- Transportation for vulnerable persons will be provided by church members who have had both a criminal record background check and a driving record (history) check.

**Sex Offender Registry Data**

- The North Carolina Sex Offender Registry will be reviewed for all Clayton, Garner, Smithfield, Wendell and Selma zip codes every six months by either the associate pastor or senior pastor.
- If a church member or constituent name is located on the registry, their involvement in church worship and ministry will be considered to ensure that both the individual and the church members are protected.
- Should adaptations need to be made, (i.e., restriction on spaces to be accessed or the use of a companion system while at the church), this will be done to protect the privacy of the individual in conversation with the pastoral staff.

**Crisis Response Plan**

Upon the occurrence of a possible or alleged incident of abuse, any witness shall immediately provide notification based on the following:

- If the allegation is against a volunteer, the staff member in charge of the program is to be notified.
- If the allegation is against a staff member, the pastor is to be notified.
- If the allegation is against the pastor, or other ordained clergy under Episcopal appointment, the District Superintendent is to be notified.
- In all cases, the Safe Sanctuary Crisis Response Team will be notified.

**The Safe Sanctuary Crisis Response Team will do the following:**

1. Notify the parents of the alleged victim and take any necessary steps to assure his or her safety until the parents arrive.
2. Treat the accused with dignity. Make sure the accused is aware of the accusation against him or her and remove him or her from further involvement with the children or youth immediately.
3. Notify the proper law enforcement agency and follow its instructions regarding the persons and/or area involved.
4. Notify the District Superintendent's Office.
5. The person notified of the alleged abuse will complete a "Confidential Report of Suspected Incident of Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Abuse" (see attached) and keep a written record of all steps taken by the Church in response to the allegations of abuse until such a list is passed along to the Crisis Response Team.
6. The designated spokesperson for the church is the Pastor, unless the Pastor is the accused. In that case, the District Superintendent will appoint a spokesperson. Only the designated spokesperson will make any necessary statements or responses to the news media.
7. Seek prompt legal advice from the Church's attorney.

# Confidential Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of abuse of youth or child(ren): _____

2. Alleged Victim's Name: _____
   Alleged Victim's age/date of birth: _____

3. Date/place of initial conversation with/report from witness or alleged victim: _____
_____
_____

4. Witness' (or Alleged Victim's) initial statement causing sufficient grounds for a Report: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Name of person accused of abuse: _____
   Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other): _____
_____

Actions Required:

□ **Notify parents (or family member of vulnerable adult) of alleged victim**
Date/time completed: _____
Conversation Summary: _____
_____
_____
_____

□ **Remove accused from responsibility until investigation can take place. Treat the accused with dignity and as a child of God.**

□ **Notify Pastor**
Date/time completed: _____
Spoke with: _____
Conversation Summary: _____
_____
_____
_____

□ **Notify Legal Authority**
Date/time completed: _____
Spoke with: _____
Conversation Summary: _____
_____
_____
_____

□ **Notify District Superintendant**
Date/time completed: _____
Spoke with: _____
Conversation Summary: _____
_____
_____
_____

_____ _____
Signature of Person Making the Report Date

# Horne Memorial United Methodist Church
# Youth Ministries

## Electronic Communication Permission Form

Our Youth Minister wishes to stay in contact with the students that are engaged in our Youth Ministry. Today's youth communicate primarily via electronic means such as email, texting, and social media, like Facebook. We feel that it is important for parents to know about any electronic communication that their child may be engaging in with any adult. Toward that end, if you would give your permission for your child to use electronic communication with the Youth Director, please indicate the necessary information below.

□ Yes, I grant permission for my child to engage in electronic communication with the Youth Director and leaders.

□ No, I do not grant permission for my child to engage in electronic communication with the Youth Director and leaders.

✠✠✠

The following means can be used to communicate with my child:

□ Email
My child's email address is: _____

□ Cell phone – texting or voice
My child's cell phone number is: _____

□ Social Media
- □ Facebook
- □ Twitter

✠✠✠

Youth's Name: _____

Parent's Name (Please Print): _____

Parent's signature: _____ Date: _____

I have read the Safe Sanctuaries Policy for Horne Memorial UMC and agree to abide by it.

Printed Name

Signature

Date