

GUMC Safe Sanctuaries Program



Grace United Methodist Church (GUMC)
Wilmington, North Carolina
Safe Sanctuaries Program

Recommended by the GUMC Safe Sanctuaries Team
(Champion, Analytical Writer, Monitor, Trainer, Coordinator)
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Biblical teaching

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.

Safe Sanctuaries Logic

God calls us to share His abiding love. God calls us to create communities of faith and fellowship where people grow safe and strong. God calls us to make our churches safe places, welcoming & protecting children and vulnerable persons from abuse. God's love combined with our faith & fellowship result in Grace United Methodist Church being a welcoming protective place of Worship.

Covenant Statement

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, youth, and vulnerable people. We will continue to monitor this Safe Sanctuaries Program and conduct a formal annual review. Revisions will be published as they are adopted. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the recruitment and selection of staff members and volunteers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all who interact with children and youth regarding the use of appropriate policies and procedures; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect of a child, youth or adult that conforms to the requirements of all applicable laws.



There are many examples of abuse in our world, such as: Physical, Verbal, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect.

Definitions of each of these can be found in any literature about abuse. If we suspect anyone (volunteer, employee, parent, visitor, contractor) we will take proper precautions to have them removed from their church duties and presence.

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There is a culture of ZERO Tolerance for abuse at Grace United Methodist Church. See Personnel Policy Reference Manual as confirmation:

2.4 Safe Sanctuaries

5.2 Harassment - Zero Tolerance

6.0 Campus Safety and Security

18 Guidelines - For staff & volunteers working with children and youth

- 1 - **Background checks:** All screening will be conducted by an external professional organization. Persons who are a threat to children, youth, or adults are not permitted to volunteer or be employed in any church sponsored program.
- 2 - **Discipline:** Train children in a respectful and positive manner. Combine practices such as supportive, encouraging behavior with firm and fair boundaries. Partner with parents when an appropriate behavior plan is needed.
- 3 - **Emergency Procedures:** Under development by the "Campus Safety and Security Ministry Task Force." Overall responsibility resides with the Trustees.
- 4 - **First Aid:** Kits are provided by GUMC Trustees and will be routinely monitored for restocking purposes. These kits will be in the multi-purpose rooms and available in a church vehicle when travelling.
- 5 - **Hiring Staff Members:** See Personnel Policy Reference Manual Topic 2.1 or any Staff Parish Relations Committee member for details on "Employment Process: Recruit, Interview, Selection, Orientation & Support"
- 6 - **Identification:** Anytime an infant or toddler is in Nursery care they must wear proper identification at all times. Children will only be released to the proper guardian or preauthorized adult.
- 7 - **Limited Counseling:** Individual counseling sessions are to be infrequent and short duration.
- 8 - **Monitor:** All classrooms and other areas of the campus buildings and playground will be monitored at all times during activities while children or youth are present.

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9 - **Over 18 & 5:** must be over the age of 18 and must be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth in the group.

10 - **Parental advance notice and permission:** Required before any child or youth may attend any church retreats or mission (day/overnight). Parents must be informed of all activities and give permission in writing for child/youth release to the church group.

11- **Position Descriptions:** See Personnel Policy Reference Manual, Topic 8.3

12 - **Retreats & Mission Trips:** During off campus/overnight retreats there will always be the requirement of correct ratio of adult volunteers to children and youth. The ratio of children/youth to adults will be one adult per five to seven children/youth. If the genders are mixed there will be appropriate adult volunteers to the number of children/youth. If there is an overnight retreat supervisors will sleep in separate beds from the children/youth. Possible adult volunteers to sleep in separate rooms according to situations.

13 - **Safe Equipment:** All activity equipment will be periodically and annually examined for any safety issues equipment may incur from regular usage. Any deficiencies will be resolved or the equipment will be removed until repairs are properly made. See outdoor "Fun and Safe Playground Guidelines" for details.

14 - **6 months hospitality rule:** All volunteers must be either a regular attendee or member of GUMC for at least six month before seeking a volunteer position with children and youth.

15 - **Social Media:** Participation of photos or videos must be accompanied by a signed permission from the guardian or parents of the child. The duration of permission is continuous until superseded for any reason. We record photos and videos for marketing purposes only for GUMC. No photos or videos are released or sold to outside parties. If at any time a parent or guardian feels a photo or video should be removed from print and/or website it will be done so immediately.

16 - **Training:** Required to participate in a comprehensive Safe Sanctuaries training which will include what abuse is, how to recognize it, who abusers are and how to report suspected abuse. Trainees will be asked to sign a statement that they have been trained professionally. Additional training may be provided throughout the year as needed.

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17- Vehicles: Trustees must give permission for any vehicles used for a church outing. All operators of vehicles must be 25 and older plus have no convictions of DWI, excessive speed violations or drug related charges within the last 7 years. The driver of any church vehicle accepts all responsibility to ensure the safety of all passengers.

18- Window or Open Door: When one adult is conducting studies in a classroom the door will have a window or remain open to the hallway so that roving monitors have visual access.



What if the unthinkable happens?

If and when there is an accident or incident the leader (staff or volunteer) will immediately address the situation. If there is a need to contact 911 it will be done. If appropriate, parents will be notified immediately. Once the person and situation are deemed safe a proper report will be completed by the staff or volunteer. This report will remain in a designated file for one year.

The ultimate goal in responding to an incident is for: a just resolution; real accountability; and healing for all parties.

When a GUMC Staff person or laity leader suspects the possibility of abuse during any church related activity he or she may contact 911 if they feel it necessary. The Sheriff's Department and/or NC Department of Social Services will conduct a proper investigation. A suspected abuse incident report will be filed. Meanwhile the GUMC Trustees will suspend the suspected person(s) from

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church activities and campus. If appropriate, Trustees will determine whether the person(s) may return to church activities and campus.

United Methodist Church Resources

Web-site

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/safe-sanctuaries>

Booklets

