



Rehobeth United Methodist Church Of Guilford County, Inc.

4475 Rehobeth Church Road, Greensboro, NC 27406

Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures

Introduction:

In keeping with the resolution adopted by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church in April 1996, and in view of the Biblical teachings, traditions and beliefs of The United Methodist Church, We – the congregation of Rehobeth United Methodist Church of Guilford County, Inc. – adopt the following policies and procedures to provide a Safe Sanctuary for children and youth.

Purpose Overview:

Rehobeth United Methodist Church adopts the following policy and procedures: 1) to provide as safe and secure an environment as is practically possible within church buildings, on any church property, and for any function connected with the ministries and operations of this church; 2) to prevent the abuse or neglect of children and youth especially, and all people inclusively; and 3) to protect and bless all who enter our doors or participate in our ministries as a demonstration of God's intentional love for all people. In summary, our goal is to prevent harm, provide safety, and share God's Love.

Statement of Covenant and Policy:

The Christian community of Rehobeth United Methodist Church pledges to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in ways that promote the safety and spiritual growth of children, youth and adults, and of all who work with children and youth. We pledge to protect all who enter our doors by following procedures designed to prevent any form of abuse, neglect or exploitation in accordance with the general statutes of North Carolina and specifically chapters 7, 7A, 7B, and 14 of North Carolina Criminal Law and Procedure. Nothing in our policy or procedures shall hinder or prevent the investigation of suspected, reported, or confirmed violations of any North Carolina criminal laws.

Safe Sanctuary Procedures:

1. Rehobeth United Methodist Church shall implement and maintain policy for recruiting, screening, hiring, and training all church staff, Preschool staff, and volunteers who work with children and youth.
 - a) Criminal background checks will be conducted for all adults assigned or volunteering at any time to work with children or youth. Background reports will be retained in locked file.
 - b) Previous employment and references may be checked for those in supervisory roles with children and youth, including but not limited to paid staff.
 - c) Training includes at minimum required participation in an annual review of these policies, and commitment to abide by the Annual Safe Sanctuary Participation Covenant. Signed Participation Covenants will be retained in locked file.
2. The annual Safe Sanctuary review sessions, required for all child and youth workers, will be open to all church members, especially parents and family of children and youth. Copies of the current Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures will be distributed at the review sessions.
3. All adult volunteers working with minors must have attended Rehobeth UMC regularly for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment, must complete a Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures Review, and have a criminal background check and signed Participation Covenant on file.

4. The “5-Year Buffer Rule:” All primary leaders of any church youth group must be at least five years older than the oldest youth member supervised in that group. Note: Teens may help work with children or children’s groups when supervised by one or more adults. Any request for an exception to the “5-Year Buffer Rule” must be reviewed by the Church Council. For the purpose of these stated policies and procedures, an “adult” is defined as being 21 years of age or older, and/or at least 5 years older than the eldest youth participating in a youth function.

5. The Buddy System: Parents, teachers, and leaders of anyone under the age of 18 are to ensure that children or youth are always accompanied by a “buddy” close to their age so no child is ever alone while on church property or participating in any activity or event associated with the church.

6. General Parental – Guardian – Adult Supervision:

- a) Parents / Guardians will accompany children into church buildings (and other program-related buildings at other locations) and escort children to the meeting / event room where an adult leader is present. Parents / Guardians will personally retrieve their children or youth from the meeting / event room or pre-designated pick-up location. No child or youth is to be dismissed from a meeting / event room or building without adult supervision.
- b) All parents, guardians, or other adults supervising young children should ensure that one trusted adult accompanies young children to and from the restroom or to other designated destinations on church property. Hall monitors are recommended for large events. No child or youth should roam in church buildings or on church property (including the playground) without adult supervision.
- c) Older children (10+) or youth assigned a specific task or destination may pursue that task or destination with adult permission and accompanied by an assigned “Buddy.” The adult assigning the task and granting permission must be able to verify timely completion of the assignment and confirm the children’s / youth’s immediate whereabouts (e.g. via mobile phone, etc.).
- d) Printed bulletin announcement should be read aloud reminding parents to accompany their child or children whenever they go elsewhere in the church during worship or any other congregational event. For example: “NOTICE TO PARENTS: In compliance with Safe Sanctuaries policy, please accompany your children if they need to leave the sanctuary during the worship service.”

7. General Safety and Security Check During Weekly Or Special Church Gatherings:

- a) Greeters will be posted at the two side and main front Sanctuary entrances for both Sunday morning services and the transition period preceding Sunday School; and two Greeters will remain in the front Sanctuary foyer during first 15 minutes of the 11:00am service. Two Greeters should sit at the mid-aisle ends of the back pews at double doors to greet and help direct any latecomers.
- b) At the start of weekly Sunday morning worship in the Sanctuary, two adults will: ensure all sanctuary building exterior doors are locked (except for front sanctuary doors); inspect all classrooms, kitchen, and Fellowship Hall for any electrical appliances that need to be switched off; and ensure any children or youth are escorted by an adult or with a “Buddy.”
- c) The Family Life Center south-side doors will be locked during services or events (except when a Greeter is present for receptions, etc.). Greeters will be present at the front exterior doors prior to events and for the first 15-20 minutes of a service or event, or for the entire duration of a come-&-go event. Greeters will remain near interior doors during services to welcome latecomers. FLC kitchen door remains locked at the discretion of the kitchen crew.
- d) Signs will be posted on the Sanctuary side-entry doors informing visitors to use the front entrance for the 11:00am worship service.
- e) Hospitality Team Greeters should be posted at all main entrances of either building as a general rule for any congregational or church-sponsored community event.

7. General Safety and Security Check During Weekly Or Special Church Gatherings (continued):

- f) Building Facilitators and / or event coordinators are responsible for ensuring sufficient safety and security monitoring personnel are on hand for non-church events (e.g. – may coordinate with and recruit Hospitality Team Greeters or other volunteers.).
- g) All exterior doors will be locked when and where Preschool is in session respectively. FLC Building Facilitators will need to coordinate with participants of any event or gathering taking place in the Family Life Center during Preschool hours to provide building access; but exterior doors should remain locked at all times during Preschool hours. Preschool staff should not be asked to leave their class rooms to provide anyone access to the building unless the matter pertains to Preschool business.

8. Two-Adults Rule: Two unrelated* adults must be present at all times for all children and youth activities in any room and at any location. (*"Unrelated" refers to adults who are not spouses: no immediate family, no same-household adults are to be the only adults present if only two adults are available to supervise children or youth. Spouses, same-household, related adults may help supervise children and youth when other "unrelated" adults are also present.) The Two-Adult Rule is to be observed as first priority.

- a) If only one adult is present in a meeting room at any time, the main door should remain open, unless the door has an observation window, and a roving monitor must be present for random observation.
- b) Two adults minimum must be present at all times for any church-related activity involving any number of children or youth away from church property, and to supervise travel to and from those activities or any overnight events on or away from church property.
- c) For events / activities involving five or more children or youth the recommended ratio of not more than five children or youth to each adult is to be observed.

9. Visibility In Rooms: Every room used for organized activities with children and youth must have a window in the door to provide visibility to all areas of the room, or the door will remain open at all times unless two or more adults are present in the room.

10. Pastoral Counseling: Pastoral counseling is confidential in nature. However, for the protection of all parties and for basic propriety, counseling will take place in settings where and at times when other people are nearby, though not within hearing distance. The Pastor's Study door will remain open enough so only the pastor is visible from the hallway.

11. Overnight events require separate gender sleeping arrangements (i.e. separate rooms, cabins, tents, or separate areas of one large meeting hall), and designated adults must supervise their same-gender group throughout the night. Travel in vehicles requires gender appropriate supervision.

12. Appropriate Touch & Speech: When placing others' interests above our own, these suggested guidelines are recommended for displaying appropriate affection and respecting personal boundaries.

- a) Never initiate a hug with a minor, except in case of their need for comfort and only in full view of other adults.
- b) Keep hugs very brief. Always be first to end a hug.
- c) Avoid first-person, emotionally laden speech that draws focus toward you. For example: as much as possible avoid statements like, "I love you" or "I care about you" in favor of "we love you," "we care about you" (etc.), always affirming the child, acknowledging their feelings, and assuring them of how much "God" and "Jesus" loves them. Your demonstration of calm restraint and care is the love and assurance the child or youth needs. The child, their feelings or concerns, and their hearing

12. Appropriate Touch & Speech (continued):

and experiencing God's love for them is our priority. We want children and youth to associate their sense of acceptance, belonging, and being loved with their experience of the whole church and especially with their group and adult leaders, and not only with one particular adult.

- d) Hug others from the side or with forward-leaning shoulder hug, and never from the back.
- e) Never impose your touch on anyone; and never comment on a young person's "shyness."
- f) Never separate yourself from the group so that you are alone with a minor. (See ¶ 13.)
- g) Make use of "teaching moments" prior to group trips or retreats to review with group members these guidelines for appropriate touch and mutual respect for "personal space."

13. Maintain Group Cohesion & Boundaries: When working with children or youth, never separate yourself or allow yourself to be separated from the group so that you are alone with a minor.

- a) If personal assistance is required for a child or youth (e.g. a child becomes physically ill) two adults must be present if appropriate, or one (gender appropriate) adult may assist the child or youth while another adult is nearby within "ear-shot."
- b) If a minor needs counsel apart from the group, one leader may take that minor aside within full view of the rest of the group. If private counsel is required, two adults must be present.
- c) No adults or helpers working with children or youth may pursue one-to-one interactions with a minor group member outside of official church functions without honoring the intent and boundaries of these guidelines. If the appearance or incidence of inappropriate dynamics are reported to church staff, after full review of expressed concerns the adult involved may be asked to stop serving in a church-related capacity with children and youth.
- d) If an adult worker is asked or offers to transport one or more children or youth to church or to a secondary location before, during, or after a church function, they must first see if another adult is available to accompany them (two adults rule). Whether or not another adult is available, always obtain verbal permission from a minor's parents before transporting their child, and obtain and maintain on-hand written permission with parent's name and contact numbers for current and future use.

14. Advanced Notice for All Church Functions: Leaders of children's and youth groups must provide parents / guardians advanced notice and information regarding any events planned for their children or youth, and any activity which deviates from regular group routines. (*This practice is basic to good hospitality and intentional, caring outreach. So plan ahead and share the news with everyone.*)

- a) Parental Permission Forms or one Permission Signature Form (with medical information attached or kept on file) shall accompany children / youth for all non-regular activities that do not include the parents of all participating minors, such as eating out at a non-church location, day-trips, overnights, concerts, retreats, etc.
- b) Copies of previously signed Parental Permission Forms may be maintained for repeated events when parents provide direct permission for a current event.
- c) Please Note: In order to be considered a church-related function or event, all non-regular planned events must be pre-approved by supervising staff or the Church Council and posted on the church Programs and Events Calendar.

15. All furnishings and equipment used indoors and on the playground shall be examined and assessed regularly for safety, activity and age appropriateness. Teacher or Group Leader: examine your equipment, furnishings, toys or supplies and report to the Trustees or your ministry area coordinator items that need to be replaced. Discard broken items. Trustees are to ensure that adjustments or repairs are made, and inappropriate or irreparable equipment is discarded. Note: large temporary play equipment (e.g. “inflatables,” etc.) may be rented only for official church-sponsored events on church property, and therefore are not allowed on church property for private or non-church functions.

16. First Aid & CPR: At least one adult present at every church activity shall be certified in basic First Aid (or above) and CPR, including use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs). At this time, Rehobeth UMC has two AEDs available. One AED is located on the wall of the main FLC Multipurpose Room (west) entrance. The other AED is located on facing wall of the Sanctuary building’s north side lobby entrance. The church will maintain First Aid kits in each of the following locations: kitchen in the Sanctuary building; kitchen in the Family Life Center. Storage locations for any additional First-Aid kits, including any kits designated for group travel purposes, will be announced and clearly posted.

17. Mr. Derek Carson, currently serving as Rehobeth’s Safety Coordinator, will ensure First-Aid kits are appropriately stocked and maintained, and will coordinate First-Aid, CPR, and/or AED training sessions in consultation with the Congregational Nurse and FLC Director.

18. The FLC Director and FLC Advisory Board policies will ensure consistent screening and training for Building Facilitators, and require Building Facilitators’ participation in Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures training.

19. Adequate Insurance Coverage: Rehobeth United Methodist Church will maintain and provide adequate liability insurance for facilities (and church van if applicable), covering accident or injury to participants in church-sponsored activities, as well as coverage for sexual and other forms of abuse. If a van is rented, adequate liability insurance should be purchased with the rental contract in addition to the existing church policy coverage.

20. Volunteers using personal vehicles for transporting people to and from church events must provide proof they have adequate insurance and, by agreeing to abide by these Safe Sanctuary policies, also agree to release Rehobeth United Methodist Church of Guilford County, Inc. from any liability for accidental injury or damages while using their personal vehicle for church-related events.

21. Legal Reporting Requirement: All Rehobeth United Methodist Church staff, Preschool staff, volunteer workers with children and youth, and all adults on church premises or affiliated with church ministries are required by North Carolina state law to report from a reasonable “standard of knowledge” any suspected case of: “child abuse and/or neglect by a parent, guardian, custodian or caretaker” (*NC Gen. Statute 7B-301*); or “abuse, neglect or exploitation of a disabled or elder adult by their caretaker.” (*NC Gen. Statute 108A-2*). Suspected cases or incidents of abuse or any inappropriate conduct should be reported immediately to uninvolved executive church staff for immediate documentation, followed by immediate subsequent reporting to the Guilford County Sheriff’s Department (336-641-3694), and to the Guilford County Department of Social Services Director and the appropriate Division Director (e.g. to Child and Family Services, or Aging and Adult Services). Church policy requires written documentation of reports conveyed to DSS and Sheriff. Documented report will then be given to the church’s Designated Spokesperson who will proceed as directed below in paragraph ¶ 22.

Guilford County Department of Social Services contact information (next page):

Guilford County Department of Social Services contact information:

1203 Maple Street
Greensboro, N. C. 27405
Telephone: (336) 641-3000

DSS Interim Director:	Joe Raymond	336-641-3708
Child and Family Services Division Director:	Dr. Jeffrey Williams	336-641-7618
Aging and Adult Services Division Director:	Jenise Davis	336-641-3380

22. The Designated Spokesperson: In case of an incident or allegation of abuse or misconduct, the church shall have one Designated Spokesperson to relate to local news media and general public inquiries. The Designated Spokesperson will first contact the Northern Piedmont District Superintendent and the WNC-Conference Director of Communications for review of a prepared statement, and only then release the prepared statement to news media.

Until stated otherwise, the Designated Spokesperson is Mr. Dave Winfree. In the event that Dave Winfree is not available, Mrs. Jo Covert will serve as the Designated Spokesperson; and if she is not able then the *current Church Lay Leader* will be the Designated Spokesperson. All other church members or any persons affiliated with Rehobeth United Methodist Church must refrain from speaking or interacting with any news media, Internet media or forums, or the general public, and refer all inquiries to the Designated Spokesperson.

23. Felony / Misdemeanor Convictions: Any person under investigation for, or convicted of a felony or misdemeanor involving minors will not be allowed to teach or supervise minors.

24. Anyone convicted of or under investigation for abusing a minor must be accompanied by an adult host while on church property or participating in church ministries. When criminal conviction or current legal status is known beforehand, their initial visits must be pre-arranged in consultation with the pastor and with their designated church host. We wish to welcome all people in Christ's compassion, love, and wise discipline while providing a safe refuge for all. Any such person who disregards these procedures or refuses supervision will be asked to leave church property. Legal action will be taken if warranted.

Conclusion:

In all of our ministries, Rehobeth United Methodist Church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that every child, youth and adult 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, Baptismal Covenant II in the United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44*). This 2017 revised edition of **Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures for Rehobeth United Methodist Church** was first made effective October 5, 2014 by vote of the extant Administrative Board. This edition, produced from the December 5, 2016 annual review, replaces preceding policy statements and guidelines. The Education Work Area and Safe Sanctuary Committee may revise and update this policy when deemed necessary. Any significant changes to the intent or major sections of this policy must be reviewed and approved by the Church Council.

Refer to: The United Methodist Book of Resolutions; Resolution 3084: Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church (adopted 1996, 2004, 2008); and Resolution 8009: Church Participation by a Registered Child Sex Offender (adopted 2004, 2008).