

Apex United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuaries Policy

Approved by Church Council August 24, 2026

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Emergency Contact Numbers:

Emergency: 911
Apex Police Department (non-emergency): 919-362-8661
Poison Control Center: 1-800-222-1222

1. Statement of Purpose and Commitment

1.1 **Statement of Purpose**: The 1996 General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The Safe Sanctuaries program was created as a guideline for churches to follow to keep our Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, and Leaders and Volunteer Helpers safe. In this resolution, we are reminded that 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 the realm of God. In Micah 6:6-8 (NRSV), God requires us “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

1.2 **Statement of Commitment**: Apex United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and nurturing church home in which our Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults can experience God’s love and grow in their Christian faith. As members of the Body of Christ, we all share in this responsibility and we further commit to demonstrate 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). Our Methodist founder John Wesley lived by three rules which are consistent with our Safe Sanctuaries values: 1. Do no harm, 2. Do good, and 3. Stay in love with God. To this end, anyone who is concerned about the physical or emotional safety of a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable adult in our congregation, or anyone who believes they have been harmed, is required to report the incident so that we may fulfill our commitment to maintaining a safe and nurturing church home.

1.3 **Application**: This Safe Sanctuaries Policy applies to all ministries of the Apex United Methodist Church involving Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults. In addition, all individuals and organizations leasing, licensing, renting, or otherwise using all or any portion of real property owned by Apex United Methodist Church are required to follow this Safe Sanctuaries Policy in connection with the use of the real property.

Luke 18:15-17
The Little Children and Jesus

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the Children to him and said, “Let the little Children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

2. Terminology

The following definitions shall apply to this Safe Sanctuaries Policy:

Abuse: Abuse comes in many different forms such as: physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, elder abuse, financial abuse, verbal abuse, bullying, etc.

AUMC: Apex United Methodist Church

Unaffiliated Third Party: Any individual or organization using all or any portion of the real property owned by Apex United Methodist Church, pursuant to any oral or written lease, license, or other agreement.

Leader: Individuals aged 18 and older who are given the responsibility of managing, leading or working directly with Children and/or Youth and/or Vulnerable Adults. With respect to AUMC programming, a Leader will be one of the following:

Staff Leader: All Leaders who are employed by AUMC, even if employment is on a temporary basis.

2 Leader Rule: AUMC (with respect to AUMC-sponsored classes, activities, and programs) and the Unaffiliated Third Party (with respect to their use of the AUMC property) shall endeavor at all times to maintain a minimum of two Leaders, or a Leader and Volunteer Helper, during any class, group activity, or other program involving Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults.

Volunteer Leader: All Leaders who are acting as volunteers serving in a ministry of AUMC.

With respect to any Unaffiliated Third Party, the term “Leader” includes any individual volunteering for, employed by, or contracted by the Unaffiliated Third Party who is or appears to be responsible for managing, leading or working directly with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults.

SPRC: Staff Parish Relations Committee

Volunteer Helper: Individuals who teach, work, or help alongside a Leader and have not been given the authority to volunteer alone. These individuals are volunteers who may or may not have completed Safe Sanctuaries training and may not yet have been subject to a background check.

Child/Children: Any person who is younger than a Youth.

Youth: Any person who is enrolled in 6th grade through 12th grade in the local school district; or equivalent.

Vulnerable Adult: A person aged 18 or older who is or may be unable to take care of themself or unable to protect themself against significant harm or serious exploitation.

Chaperone: Is a Leader who is aged 21 or older who accompanies a group of Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults overnight either at AUMC or other location. The Chaperone must be 5 years or older than the oldest Children or Youth.

Driver: Is a Leader who is aged 21 or older who will be driving one of the above listed groups.

In all events, any Leader, Volunteer Helper, Chaperone, and Driver must be at least 5 years older than the Children or Youth they are managing, leading, or supervising.

Any other capitalized terms have the meaning commonly used by AUMC members.

3. Standard Procedures for Operating Safely

3.1 Safety

The following steps are taken to ensure our Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, Leaders, Volunteer Helpers, and AUMC members are safe:

3.1.1 All Leaders are given information about our policies and procedures during a training process. It is the responsibility of the Unaffiliated Third Party to provide such training to their volunteers, employees, agents, and contractors consistent with this Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

3.1.2 AUMC (with respect to AUMC-sponsored classes, activities, and programs) and the Unaffiliated Third Party (with respect to their use of the AUMC property) shall endeavor at all times to maintain a minimum of two Leaders, or a Leader and Volunteer Helper, during any class, group activity, or other program involving Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults. Exceptions are addressed in Section 3.2 below. In no event shall the two Leaders, or the Leader and Volunteer Helper, be related or cohabiting.

3.1.3 All Leaders must undergo a background check every 3 years in order to work with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults every 3 years. No individuals will be permitted to work with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults if information or details from the background check discloses that the individual has any history of unacceptable criminal activity that would prevent AUMC from reasonably allowing the individual to serve as a Leader.

3.1.4 The Safe Sanctuaries Policy is available in the AUMC main office upon request and on the AUMC website.

3.1.5 Leaders are required to sign a document stating that they understand and that they will adhere to the Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

3.1.6 Staff employed by AUMC are in regular communication with Leaders to ensure policies are followed.

3.1.7 Each Leader is required to participate in Safe Sanctuaries training at least every three (3) years.

3.2 Procedures

The procedures we have adopted to ensure that our Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults are safe include but are not limited to the following:

3.2.1 A minimum of one Leader shall be in a room during any class, group activity or program involving Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults at all times. No Leader should be left alone with less than two Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults at any time.

3.2.2 In the event only one Leader is available and no Volunteer Helper is available, the door to the room shall remain open at all times, and another Leader will be assigned to roam hallways in the vicinity of the room.

3.2.3 Children and Youth classes and groups are assigned to meet in locations in the same vicinity to facilitate monitoring of activities.

3.2.4 During programming involving Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults a “drop-in policy” is in place. Leaders understand that other Leaders and Volunteer Helpers will circulate and “drop-in” randomly to rooms to ensure the Safe Sanctuaries Policy is being followed.

3.2.5 Restroom Policies:

- 3.2.5.1 Only Staff Leaders are allowed to change diapers. Only Staff Leaders take Children into restrooms to assist with toileting needs.
- 3.2.5.2 Unless accompanied by Staff Leaders, Children are monitored from outside the restroom at all times.
- 3.2.5.3 Children over the age of five (5) years old, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults are expected to go and come from restrooms on their own.
- 3.2.5.4 If parents wish to change their Children’s clothes or diapers, they need to do so in the restroom changing facilities.
- 3.2.5.5 Leaders responsible for special needs Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults should work with AUMC Staff leaders to create an individualized Safe Sanctuaries plan.

3.2.6 Parents will have access to advance notice and full information regarding event(s) in which their Child or Youth is participating.

3.2.7 Youth assigned to assist with Children’s programs are subject to the “five-years older rule.” The rule requires that the individual Youth must be at least 5 years older than the group with whom the Youth is working, in order to maintain an appropriate separation between Youth and Children. In addition, Youth must be provided coaching in classroom expectations, which shall be conducted by a Staff Leader.

3.2.8 Concern/Incident Report Forms are available at check in locations, in Children’s & Youth Ministries information areas, and on the AUMC website.

3.2.9 Adults who are less than 5 years older than the oldest Youth in attendance, can fulfill the “2-adult rule” alongside an Adult who is more than 5 years older than the oldest Youth in attendance. Both adults are responsible for providing supervision. The older adult is the primary caregiver.

4. Digital Safety

4.1 Parent/Guardian Permission

Advance parental/guardian permission is necessary for Children and Youth, and advance personal permission (or advance guardian permission, if applicable) is necessary for Vulnerable Adults, in writing for:

4.1.1 E-mailing, direct messaging, calling, texting, or sending data to a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult by computer, tablet, or cell phone; and

4.1.2 The sharing of any full name or other personal sensitive information.

4.2 Information Sharing Online

4.2.1 No Leader or Volunteer Helper shall post Easily Identifiable Personal Information online. Easily Identifiable Personal Information includes but is not limited to: address, telephone number, email address, social security number, or other identifying number or code.

4.2.2 With regard to email communication, particularly with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults, Leaders and Volunteer Helpers should use the "BCC" (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.

4.2.3 Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall be cautious when transmitting information like event dates, times, locations, or participants, to avoid publicly disclosing an event that is intended to be limited to a limited group of participants.

4.2.4 All Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing anyone on an electronic prayer list, consider using only first names.

4.3 Communication with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

4.3.1 All communications shall be conducted in a professional manner.

4.3.2 Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall save all confidential cyber-communications with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults (i.e., direct messages, text messages, emails, etc.) in order to maintain an electronic paper trail. Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall not use platforms such as Snapchat that do not allow for permanent records.

4.3.3 If a Leader or Volunteer Helper is uneasy about any topic addressed in an email or other platform, the Leader or Volunteer Helper shall send a BCC or screenshot to the parent/guardian of the Child or Youth (if appropriate) or another Leader. All Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall honor privacy, but not secrecy.

4.3.4 If abuse or threat to safety is divulged electronically, Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall follow standard reporting procedures outlined in Sections 7 and 8 of this policy.

4.4 Online Photos/Videos Sharing

4.4.1 All Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall post notice that photos and videos may be used, and invite individuals to opt out. Leaders shall maintain a list of individuals who have opted out

and shall reference such a list to prevent posting photos or videos of individuals who have opted out of such posts.

4.4.2 When posting photos and videos, Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall refrain from using last names and shall never use last names or identifiable information unless given permission by a parent or guardian of the respective Child or Youth or the guardian (if applicable) of the Vulnerable Adult.

4.4.3 When sharing photos and videos of Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults, Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall only share photos and videos that are aligned with our mission and values.

4.5 Church "Admin" on Ministry Accounts

4.5.1 Where there is no real-time interaction between viewers (e.g., a video posted but not broadcast live), the "two adult rule" applies. The rule requires that there shall always be two Leaders (who are not related to or cohabiting with each other) with administrator rights on any account that is posting official ministry content.

4.5.2 Digital/on-line church media accounts shall be set up as ministry accounts and shall have two Leaders (who are not related to or cohabiting with each other) as administrators.

4.6 Personal Use of Social Networking Sites

4.6.1 When a Leader or Volunteer Helper joins the church's social network, the social networking profile is an extension of AUMC ministry. Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall be mindful of the privacy settings on personal social networking profiles.

4.6.2 Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall consider restricting who can be a social media friend and who can follow his or her page. Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall use judgment in accepting requests from Youth. Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall not initiate friend requests with Children or Youth, and shall not follow a Child or Youth's social media account (such as Instagram, Facebook, etc) unless the Child or Youth has requested it.

4.6.3 Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall use higher level security features even if they already have a restricted profile (such as requiring approval of all comments posted to the page or account.).

4.6.4 Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall not post anything to a social networking site or blog that they would not want attached to their resume or printed in the church bulletin or newsletter.

4.6.5 Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall remove or not post inappropriate comments, photos, etc.

4.6.6 Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall encourage Children and Youth to follow these same guidelines.

4.7 Digital Meeting Platforms (Zoom, Google Meet, Facetime, etc.)

4.7.1 Two Leaders should be present in a digital meeting or gathering and arrive on the call prior to Children and Youth. Leader cameras should be turned off until both Leaders are present.

4.7.2 If more than one Leader cannot be present at the same time, allow another user to have Leader administrative privileges to monitor accounts on a regular basis. This helps meet the

"window in a door" or "open door" policies familiar for in-person meetings. Also, consider having another adult, such as a parent, on the Youth side of the call or video to acknowledge their awareness of this conversation.

4.7.3 If a Leader and Child or Youth need to have a one-on-one digital meeting, the Leader must make another Leader or the Child or Youth's parent aware of the meeting.

4.7.4 Leaders and Volunteer Helpers shall be mindful of privacy measures available on Digital Meeting Platforms, as well as how passwords are shared to protect the meeting space.

5. Leader Screening Procedure

5.1.1 Anyone wishing to be Leader in an area that directly relates to Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults must consent to a background check.

5.1.2 To participate as a Leader in an AUMC sponsored ministry or activity, you must regularly attend AUMC or have been a member for at least 6 months. If you do not meet these criteria prior to expressing interest as a Leader, a reference check may be required. Leaders are expected to be active participants in the worship life of AUMC and agree to the doctrine and practices of the United Methodist Church.

5.1.3 The Background Authorization Form is available on Apex UMC website.

5.1.4 Completed Background Authorization Forms are to be returned to a Staff Leader. Results are kept confidential and stored in a locked cabinet. Once the form is no longer needed, it is shredded to protect confidentiality.

6. Guidelines for Trips and Off-Site Programming

In addition, the following guidelines address issues of safety that may arise when Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults participate in off-campus trips and programs that are sponsored by or coordinated by AUMC.

All offsite events and trips require written permission forms even if a parent or guardian is present.

6.1 Transportation

6.1.1 A Driver can transport 3 or more Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults in a vehicle. In no event shall one Driver transport only one Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult in a vehicle. If an emergency situation arises where a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult needs transportation, but such transportation will result in violation of this Safe Sanctuaries Policy, then every reasonable effort will be made to relieve the emergency situation.

6.1.2 The Driver understands and agrees to releasing and having his or her driving record reviewed. The Driver will execute such permissions and other documents as may be necessary to grant permission to check driving history.

6.1.3 The Driver shall comply with all requirements of AUMC's insurance carrier.

6.2 Lodging and Activities

6.2.1 At no time will a Leader stay in a room with only one Child or Youth or Vulnerable Adult unless they are related. Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, and Leaders will not sleep in the same bed with anyone to whom they are unrelated.

6.2.2 Leaders, Volunteer Helpers, Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults will be separated by gender for overnight accommodations. We will work to make accommodations for transgender individuals or individuals who do not identify with their assigned sex at birth.

6.2.3 When large common sleeping areas are used, Leaders will remain in the immediate vicinity sleeping near the exits.

6.2.4 All participants should have privacy for showering/bathing. If there is a common shower, arrangements should be made to schedule showers separately for Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, Volunteer Helpers, and Leaders.

6.2.5 The AUMC Staff will obtain rules and policies of hosting organizations in advance so that a modification plan can be put in place should there be a need to adjust these guidelines to fit the host site.

6.2.6 During independent activities (e.g., skiing, beach), Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults must stay in groups, checking in with an adult supervisor in a public place at designated times.

6.3 Controlling Rules and Other Guidelines

The facility or event hosting the off-campus trip or program may have additional rules and guidelines for appropriate behaviors which must be followed in addition to AUMC's rules. It is the Leaders and Volunteer Helpers' responsibility to understand and comply with all requirements.

7. Procedure for Handling Concerns or Reported Allegations of Abuse By Apex UMC Leader or Volunteer Helper

7.1 If abuse is observed by, disclosed to or suspected by a Leader, Volunteer Helper, or staff member of AUMC, immediately (i) provide for the protection of the Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult and tend to their needs as the situation requires to ensure no further harm is done, (ii) remove the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult from the presence of the accused, and (iii) with dignity and respect for the worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable adult (and if the activity involves a group, from the group). Once the safety of the alleged victim is secured, the Senior Pastor, or designee, should inform the accused that abuse has been reported.

7.2 If abuse is observed by, disclosed to or suspected by a Leader, Volunteer Helper, or staff member of AUMC, that allegation of abuse of a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult must be immediately reported to a member of the AUMC Staff and as soon as possible to the Senior Pastor upon initial receipt of an allegation. Such notification shall be made in confidence and may be made by in-person verbal statement, phone call, text, email, or whatever form of communication is quickest for the person making the report. If the notification is made in any manner other than a submittal of the Concern/Incident Report (CIR) Form, (Particularly if it is made verbally in-person or by phone), then a CIR form must be completed as soon as reasonably possible after the initial notification. If such an allegation is reported to a staff member of AUMC, the staff person must report it immediately to the Senior Pastor. If the allegation is against the Senior Pastor, the report shall be made to the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) Chairperson and the remaining procedures followed, excluding the Senior Pastor from each process.

7.3 The Senior Pastor, or designee, will notify the parents/guardians of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and wellbeing of the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult until the parents/guardians arrive. If one or both of the parents/guardians are the alleged abuser, follow the advice of local authorities concerning notification of others and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and wellbeing of the victim Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult until the appropriate authorities arrive.

7.4 Upon receipt of such an allegation of abuse, the Senior Pastor, Church Council Chair, and SPRC Chair will immediately determine whether the allegation in question is a reportable incident within the guidelines set forth by applicable N.C. General Statutes and the Wake County Department of Human Services. In order to make such determination, the Senior Pastor, Church Council Chair, and SPRC Chair shall expeditiously consult appropriate resources, including but not limited to confidentially consulting with an attorney. If the allegation is determined to be a reportable incident, the allegation will then be reported to the appropriate authorities by the Church Council Chair or SPRC Chair and the Senior Pastor as soon as possible, but not later than 48 hours.

7.5 In addition to the above reporting, the Senior Pastor shall immediately notify the District Superintendent (DS) and Conference Communications Director (CCD) of the allegation and they will work with the DS and CCD to plan and implement further action, communication or resolution. If the allegation is against a clergy person, the DS will determine if the allegation is a chargeable offense under The Book of Discipline. If the allegation is against the Senior Pastor, the SPRC Chair will contact the DS and CCD.

7.6 If the allegation in question is not a reportable incident, the Senior Pastor, Church Council Chair, SPRC Chair and appropriate staff member(s) described in the paragraph above will immediately determine how best to further investigate the allegation in question, and/or address the same with the accused, the Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult, and their respective parents/guardian(s).

7.7 Any concern or allegation of abuse regarding a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult who is affiliated with AUMC that is directly observed or reported requires immediate report to the civil authorities pursuant to The Book of Discipline. Therefore, any report or allegation or observation of abuse made to any pastor or staff member must therefore be immediately reported to the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor and staff person will immediately contact the appropriate authorities.

7.8 Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.

7.9 Keep a written report of the steps taken by the church in response to the reported abuse. (See Concern/Incident Report Form). The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It should be kept in a secure place (locked file cabinet or secure folder online). The report should be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed.

7.10 There shall be absolutely no contact with the media, sharing of information with the media or dissemination of information in any manner except as authorized by the person(s) listed below regarding the allegations or incident. Any such contact, sharing or dissemination of information with the media or otherwise should be handled solely by the Senior Pastor or a pre-determined spokesperson, selected by the Senior Pastor or the Staff Parish Relations Committee. All such communications should be discussed and coordinated with the District Superintendent (DS) and Conference Communications Director (CCD).

8. Procedure for Handling Concern or Reported Allegations Of Abuse By Unaffiliated Third Parties

8.1 If an owner, volunteer helper or employee of an Unaffiliated Third Party receives an allegation of abuse involving a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult, regardless of where the alleged abuse occurs and regardless of the identity of the alleged abuser, the allegation must be immediately reported to a member of the AUMC Staff Member and as soon as possible to the Senior Pastor upon initial receipt of the allegation. Such notification shall be an in-person verbal statement, phone call, text, email, or whatever form of communication is quickest for the person making the report

8.1.1 If the abuse allegation is made in any manner other than a submittal of the Concern/Incident Report (CIR) Form, then a CIR form must be completed as soon as reasonably practicable after the initial report.

8.2 When any abuse allegation is reported by an Unaffiliated Third Party to a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult, the actions detailed in Section 7 above should be taken by the involved persons as quickly as possible.

9. Procedure for Distributing and Handling Concern/Incident Report Forms

9.1 **Purpose**: The purpose of the Concern/Incident Report Form is to allow AUMC members, Staff, Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, Leaders, Volunteer Helpers, and other individuals to identify and report circumstances or events that are believed to be in violation of this Safe Sanctuaries Policy or, if left unaddressed, would lead to such a circumstance or event.

9.2 **Distribution**: Concern/Incident forms are available to all Clergy, Staff, Leaders, Volunteer Helpers, church members, parents, Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, and/or visitors in a variety of ways, including but not limited to:

- 9.2.1 Ministries information areas
- 9.2.2 AUMC website
- 9.2.3 Church office

9.3 **Handling of Concern/Incident Reports:**

- 9.3.1 All Concern/Incident reports received by anyone affiliated with AUMC shall be immediately directed to the appropriate persons as set forth in the guidelines established in this Safe Sanctuaries Policy.
- 9.3.2 Access to such reports during the implementation of the procedures listed in these guidelines shall be strictly limited to the designated persons, for confidentiality reasons.
- 9.3.3 Following completion of such procedures, all such reports shall be stored in a central repository, kept locked at all times, and made available for subsequent review only by Clergy or Staff of AUMC who are directly responsible for making employment and/or leader selection decisions.

9.4 **Handling of General Concern/Incident Reports**: All reports received by anyone affiliated with AUMC that relate only to general concerns shall be immediately directed to Clergy or Staff of AUMC.

9.5 **Acknowledgement of Receipt**: Upon receipt of the Concern/Incident Report Form, the Senior Pastor or designee, will acknowledge the receipt of the form to the submitter of said form.

10. Commencement and Termination of Leader or Volunteer Helper Roles

10.1 Training and Background Check. The following steps must be followed to be an AUMC Leader. Each Leader must repeat these steps every 3 years:

- 10.1.1 Complete the on-line Safe Sanctuaries Training located at https://www.apexumc.org/?s=safe+sanctuaries
- 10.1.2 All Leaders 18 years old and older must undergo a background check. The Leader will receive an email request from Checkr asking for authorization to conduct a background check, and the Leader is required to complete the requested information.

10.2 **Commencement of Leadership**. If a Leader has not previously served as a Leader, the Leader will not begin volunteering or working as a Leader until receiving approval from AUMC Staff.

10.3 **Termination of Leadership or Volunteer Helper Roles**. If a Staff member gives notice that a Leader or Volunteer Helper must cease managing, leading, or working directly with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults as part of any and all AUMC ministries, that Leader or Volunteer Helper will immediately stop serving as a Leader or Volunteer Helper. That Leader or Volunteer Helper will cease communications to any or all Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, and/or their parents/guardians, except for communications expressly authorized in writing by a Staff member.

11. Physical Plant Safety

Trustees are charged with providing safe facilities for campus-wide usage and that all elements of a safe sanctuary are continually and carefully maintained by the staff.

To do this work of shaping safe spaces and healthy, safe, and thriving communities, the board of trustees must also enlist the congregation's support. All members of the community should be advised on the details of the Safe Sanctuaries policies in place by access to the policy on the website.

11.1 Signage

Signage directing people to the correct entrance or entrances and to specific locations within the facility is crucial.

11.2 Cameras

The most successful way to prevent abuse and harassment inside the facility is to have cameras that are clearly visible in all areas of the facility. These cameras should be set to record any motion in the covered area. This is obviously expensive and involved. However, even careful placement of a few cameras alerts people in the facility to the fact that they are being watched and protected.

11.3 Parking and Exterior Lighting

Parking should be as close as possible to the main entry of the facility, and all parking areas should be well lit. All entrances accessible from the parking area should also be well lit.

11.4 Other Outside Structures

Outside buildings are used for groundskeeping or storage. These areas lend themselves to inappropriate use and should be always locked unless in use. A careful record should be kept of who has keys to such facilities.

11.5 Fencing and Landscaping

Fences are used to enclose and protect the outside areas. Lattice or mesh fencing is recommended to prevent hiding or concealing inappropriate activities. Similarly, shrubs should not cover windows nor be situated so that it is possible to easily hide among the landscaping.

11.6 Interior Lighting

All hallways and rooms should be well lit when people are present for ministry activities, using motion sensors where possible.

11.7 Windows

Visibility and clear sight lines are essential for maintaining safe spaces. Every door in the church should have a window, including doors to supply closets. The window should be large enough so that any activity in the room will be visible through the window.

11.8 Restrooms

While there obviously should not be windows in restroom doors, there should be adequate lighting that turns on when the door is opened and allows for vision in all areas of the restroom. If possible, the use of family restrooms or non-gender restrooms should be considered, allowing for increased privacy while also making facilities more welcoming.

11.9 Keys

Access to church facilities outside of traditional worship hours should be carefully restricted. Ministry leaders and church staff should know exactly who has keys, to what entrance they have access, and when this access will be used. As much as possible, people should be prevented from having access to the facility other than in accordance with established protocols and planned events. Consideration should be given to locking rooms when not in use.

11.10 Usage by Outside Groups

As outside groups are allowed to gather in church spaces, first and foremost, all outside groups should be instructed on the Safe Sanctuaries policy that is in place and sign documentation agreeing to follow these policies and procedures.

Additionally, outside groups should sign a lease agreement. Note these important items that should be included in a lease agreement:

- the exact location being rented and time when the facility will be in use,
- who will be given access to keys or when the facility will be locked/unlocked for use by an outside group, and
- agreement to follow Safe Sanctuaries policy.

11.11 Access to the Facilities by Emergency Groups

All emergency response personnel in a community should be provided with a diagram of the church facilities that includes specific notes describing what activities occur at the facility and in what locations.

12. Sexual Offender Policy

Living into our claim to Love All, Serve All, Welcome All, we acknowledge that some circumstances require additional care and concern in order to provide protection to the congregation as a whole. When a registered sex offender is a part of our church family, we must be aware of potential issues for protection of both that person as well as all others in their presence.

12.1 Background Checks Our Safe Sanctuaries process includes performing background checks on all volunteers and employees. Embedded in that process is a computerized search of the national Sex Offender Registry. In the event a person is so identified, the senior pastor will initiate a conversation with the person in accordance with this policy.

12.2 Self-identification Under the terms of settlement, registered offenders are generally required to self-identify to any group in which they may participate. In the event a person self-identifies to anyone other than the senior pastor, the senior pastor is to immediately be noticed and they will initiate a conversation with the person in accordance with this policy.

12.3 Disclosure Depending on the desired level of involvement in church life, the Senior Pastor may need to notify the District Superintendent, the chairs of Safe Sanctuary, Trustees, Church Council, and SPRC, some staff, and possibly other individuals as the situation may warrant.

12.4 Shepparding The general rule is to have the person accompanied when they leave very public common spaces. The escorts are generally two unrelated individuals who act in pairs so there is no concern about them being accused of anything or any ambiguity about conduct.

12.5 Covenant There is a need for a written document between the parties for mutual understanding. It may include acknowledgement of the situation which resulted in placement on the registry and any legal limitations of the person's sentence. Depending on the county with jurisdiction, the covenant may require input from the parole officer, church attorney, conference chancellor, church leaders, and/or escorts.

The document should include identification of physical areas which are prohibited, especially any locations where children or disabled adults are present, e.g. Sunday School, nursery, preschool, VBS, playgrounds, restrooms, etc. Additionally, no registered sex offender should have access to keys to the physical facilities.

The covenant should be reviewed annually, updated as necessary, and retained in a secure confidential location, accessible to the Senior Pastor and chair of Trustees. The agreement should be shared with incoming pastors during a leadership transition period.

12.6 Checklist The following is to aid the Senior Pastor and committee in addressing this issue.

- ☐ Upon obtaining knowledge of a sexual offender presence, or desire to be present, in our facilities, either through self-identification or other means, the Senior Pastor will notify the safe sanctuary committee. The committee will assist the Senior Pastor in fulfilling the Safe Sanctuary policy related to Sexual Offenders.
- ☐ A conversation between the Senior Pastor and the person will take place, be documented, and relayed to the committee. Additionally, the appropriate church leaders will be notified.
- ☐ Accountability partners will be identified and included in creating the covenant document.
- ☐ The covenant document will include these core principles.
- Must include all parties, Offender, Senior Pastor, accountability partners, Church Council Chair, SPRC Chair, others as deemed appropriate.
- Recognition by person that earlier events occurred and stated repentance from that activity.
- Recognition this is not a private agreement and will be shared with appropriate leaders as necessary.
- Openness to allow discussions with law enforcement and parole officers.
- Willingness for continued professional counseling if appropriate.
- Identifies specific rules and prohibited locations.
- Understanding that rules of the written covenant must strictly be followed and acknowledgement of consequences of non compliance.
- Must be able to alert “next church” .
- Understanding the covenant will be updated when the identity of any party changes and at least annually.

Appendix 1:
Concern/Incident Report - AUMC

Submitted by: _____ Cell Phone Number: _____

Address:_____

Program/Event Involved: _____ Event Date:_____

Leader(s) Involved (Paid or Unpaid):_____

General Concern/Incident _____

_____

_____

Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult Involved (and Age):

_____

Others Involved in the Incident (and Contact Information, if available):

_____

_____

_____

Witnesses to Incident (if Any):

_____

_____

Has Incident Been Resolved: ( ) Yes ( ) No

Are The Parents/Guardians Aware of the Incident: ( ) Yes ( ) No

Who Has Been Notified to This Point (Relationship to Those Involved):

_____

_____

Signature (Reporter): _____ Date_____

Submit completed form in an envelope marked as “High Priority - Personal and Confidential” to the Apex UMC church office or mail to:

Senior Pastor
Apex UMC
100 S. Hughes Street
Apex, NC 27502

For office use only:

Reviewed by: _____ Date Reviewed: _____

Follow-Up Action Taken? ( ) Yes ( ) No Date of Follow-Up: _____

If yes, describe: _____

If no, why is follow-up unnecessary? _____