



**Edenton Street**  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## ESUMC Safe Sanctuary Covenant

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# Purpose

As a baptismal community committed to honoring the sacred worth and flourishing of all God's beloved children, Edenton St UMC embraces the seriousness of a well-imagined and diligently-practiced Safe Sanctuary Covenant. The policies that comprise this Covenant are grounded in our United Methodist commitment to "do no harm," and, ultimately, ground us in a set of intentional practices that ensure we live as a community of nurture for children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

## Volunteer Process

Volunteering with children and youth at Edenton St UMC is a privilege, not a right. Because of this truth, all volunteers must go through our volunteer process and onboarding before beginning their volunteering.

### Application Process

**Step One** - Set up a meeting with the staff lead over the area where you would like to volunteer with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

**Step Two** - Be invited by that staff lead to apply for a volunteer position.

**Step Three** - Complete the Background Check Consent Form and return to the Director of Children's or Youth Ministry. All Background Check Consent Forms will be kept in a locked office at Edenton St UMC.

### Onboarding Process

**Step One** - To begin the onboarding process you must first pass the background check run by the staff of Edenton St UMC.

**Step Two** - Attend a Safe Sanctuary Covenant Training (held twice annually) and sign the Safe Sanctuary Covenant sheet and return to the Director of Children's or Youth Ministry to keep on file.

**Step Three** - Be invited into and accept a volunteer position with Edenton St UMC and attend any specific training for that ministry area. For some ongoing positions, references will be needed and checked by the appropriate staff positions.

**Step Four** - Begin volunteering.

### Ongoing

**Every Year** - Volunteers will read the Safe Sanctuary Covenant and sign the Safe Sanctuary Covenant form and return to the Director of Children's or Youth Ministry to keep on file.

**Every Three years** - Volunteers will attend a Safe Sanctuary Covenant Training (held twice annually) and submit a new Background Check Consent Form and return to the Director of Children's or Youth Ministry.

## Policy

All meetings of children and/or youth affiliated with ESUMC will be governed by the following guidelines:

### A. Two Adult Rule

Two approved adults must be present at all times. This applies to classroom activities, activities away from the church facility, and when transporting children and youth. Whenever possible, teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more in ministry events involving children or youth. Concerted effort will be made to recruit sufficient numbers of volunteer teachers/leaders to permit such team teaching/leading. Other church sponsored or community groups of children or youth who meet at the church should have two or more leaders present whenever possible. When feasible, both male and female leaders would be present. If the group stays overnight at the church, or if a church sponsored group leaves the premises, two or more leaders must be present and must include at least one male and female if the group is mixed gender.

Floating adult:

It is preferable to have a floating adult volunteer in the case of an event such as Sunday School where there are many classes at the same time, and where for some reason it may not be possible for two adults to be in the same class. This floating adult can look into each classroom and help when needed.

Goals for adults to children ratios:

ESUMC has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children whenever feasible. These ratios are goals. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of children showing up for an event, or volunteers not showing up.

Age/Grade of Child	# of adults	# of children
0-2	2	6
3-5	2	10

K-2nd	2	16
3rd-5th	2	20
6th-12th	2	20

**B. Nursery Check-in and Check-out Procedure**

All parents utilizing the church nursery will observe the check-in/check-out procedure as specified in the Nursery Policy Manual. We currently have a computer check-in system for parents, at a desk that is managed by either a Nursery Volunteer or a staff person.

**C. Open Door Policy**

Further protection for the children requires that an open door policy be followed. This policy shall state that the parents of the children served, the clergy, administrative and professional staff of the church have the right to visit and observe the children’s/youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.

**D. Outside Access**

There must be access to a phone when groups are at or away from the church facility. The church office or authorized church representative will be given this number prior to the groups’ departure from church property.

**E. Doors and Windows**

All classroom and office doors will have a window or visibility from the hallway or remain open while occupied.

**F. Individual Interactions**

One-on-one interactions are sometimes necessary and appropriate but care must be taken that they be conducted in an environment that provides visibility by other adults.

**G. Touch**

Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth.

Appropriate touch should be initiated by the child and should be a response to the child’s need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult’s emotional need and should be within their own comfort level of touch. Touching and affection should only be given when in the presence of other adult volunteers or staff. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present and the touching is open to observation. This is especially important when diapering a baby or helping a young child change clothes or use the restroom. Volunteers with children need to behave always in

a way that is beyond reproach and must always foster trust. A child's preference not to be touched should always be respected. Church volunteers and staff are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others, including other children. Church volunteers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other adults with their ministry leader, staff member, or a pastor.

#### H. Outings away from church property

All children and youth participating in out-of-town and overnight outings must have written consent and a medical release form. There must be access to a phone when groups are away from church property. If the outing involves water activities such as swimming, a certified lifeguard will be present whenever reasonably possible.

In no circumstance is one adult (other than the parent) to take a child or children on an overnight outing alone. Female staff will supervise female youth in their sleeping quarters and male staff will supervise male youth. Married couples will not stay together but observe the female/female and male/male sleeping arrangements. With the exception of a parent/child combination, an adult and youth will not occupy the same bed or sleeping bag.

#### I. Ministry Discipline

All teachers and workers will use the following discipline measures:

1. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the teacher will tell the child specifically what they are doing is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is.
2. If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity.
3. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a distance to work alone away from other students.
4. If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, a teacher will notify the Children's Ministries or Youth Staff, who will talk to the child and parents if appropriate.
5. No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g. ridicule, are to be used at any time.

#### J. Training

Prior to working with youth or children, adult volunteers must be trained in our church's Safe Sanctuary Covenant. This training must be done in person every three years. A Safe Sanctuary Covenant Form must be signed by the volunteer annually, after reviewing the policy, in order to volunteer with children or youth.

Background checks must be run on all volunteers with children and youth every three years.

# Response by Church Workers to Allegations of Abuse

North Carolina is a mandatory reporting state. It is our legal and moral responsibility to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that abuse takes place. We shall report suspected abuse to stop potentially existing abuse and to prevent further abuse. To report abuse is to witness to the world of the love and justice of God. Reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. If abuse occurs, it is our intention to act as an advocate for all affected persons, providing support, information, assistance and intervention. We seek to provide a supportive atmosphere, offering both objectivity and empathy as we seek to create a climate in which healing can take place.

If abuse is suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, that person shall report the incident immediately. (If the accused is the pastor, see information below.) Be prepared to do the following in order:

## A. Protect

IMMEDIATELY ensure the protection of and tend to the needs of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult as the situation requires to ensure no further harm is done. Remove the child, youth, or vulnerable adult from the presence of the accused. Remove the accused from the presence of other children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

## B. Report

IMMEDIATELY notify the proper authorities using the contact information found on the attached Incident Report Checklist:

1. Notify the event supervisor who will ensure that all steps are followed. If that person is unreachable, continue the reporting process.
2. Notify 911 and state that you are reporting suspected abuse and need the appropriate social worker from Child Protective Services (CPS) or Adult Protective Services (APS).
3. Notify the Director of the appropriate ministry.
4. The Director will notify the Senior Pastor or appropriate pastor if you do not have their contact number.
5. The pastor or designee will notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety of the child/youth until the parent(s) arrive. It is important to emphasize that the proper authorities must be notified even if the parent(s) does not wish the incident to be reported.
6. Provide written documentation concerning the incident on the Documentation Checklist to be given to the Senior Pastor and/or Chair of the Staff/Parish Committee.
7. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the pastor will report the incident immediately to the church's attorney, the church's insurance company, and the district superintendent. The district superintendent

will report the allegation to the bishop's office. Do not try to handle this without professional assistance.

8. If the pastor is the accused party, the designee will notify the chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, Associate Pastor(s) and the District Superintendent.
9. If one, or both, of the parents is the alleged abuser, contact the proper authorities listed above. Follow their advice about notification of the parents.

#### C. Clergy

If the accused is a clergy (deacon or elder) member of an annual conference, local pastor, or diaconal minister, provisions of Paragraph 359 and Paragraph 2702 of the UMC Book of Discipline must be followed.

#### D. Rights Of The Accused

Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the pastor or other designated person may tell the accused that a report has been made. If the accused is a volunteer or paid staff of the church, that person shall be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid staff person of the church, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income by the SPRC until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

#### E. Media

Any contact with the media should be handled by the Senior Pastor. Care will be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The spokesperson should generally convey that the matter is under investigation and any comments made prior to the conclusion of the investigation would be premature.

#### F. Documentation

A written report of the basic information shall be kept to ensure on-going ministry to, and advocacy for, victims and others involved. A form for this purpose is attached. The report shall be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It shall be filed in a secure place in order to ensure confidentiality. It shall be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed. The church must also file a copy of the report with the bishop's office of the North Carolina Conference where it shall remain confidential.

# Covenant of Care

The vitality of Edenton St UMC's Safe Sanctuary Covenant depends on the covenant commitment of our entire community. By the grace of God, our baptisms bound us to one another, that we might grow in Christ through "keeping watch over each other in love" (Wesley). Though the nature of this work is serious, it bears the joyous fruit of witnessing disciples of all ages experience the deep abundance of life with God. Thank you for helping us nurture communion in a way that is marked with intentionality, hospitality, and mutual trust.





# Safe Sanctuary Covenant

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have (re)read the Edenton St UMC Safe Sanctuary Covenant and commit to upholding it during the duration of my time volunteering with Edenton St UMC. I will uphold the policy for myself and speak up if I see others not following this policy.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_