



DILWORTH  
UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH

# SAFE SANCTUARIES

Creating a safe, secure, nurturing environment to help all persons become a sign of Christ's love for the world.

## Purpose and Pledge

By establishing this Safe Sanctuaries abuse prevention policy and accompanying procedures, Dilworth Church demonstrates our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all people.

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the Good News of Jesus the Christ in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all members of vulnerable populations, as well as all who serve in ministry with vulnerable populations. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our servants regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

## Definitions

“Vulnerable populations” includes anyone who works with...

- ...minors (children and youth under age 18),
- ...adults experiencing homelessness,
- ...individuals that experience physical disabilities, intellectual and/or developmental disability, and/or mental illness.

## Policies

### 1. Volunteer Requirements

- a. Each ministry servant working with vulnerable populations must complete the online Dilworth Church Safe Sanctuary module and quiz (even if they have been trained at another church).

- b. Ministry servants working with vulnerable populations have their background securely checked.
  - i. All records related to background checks will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and accessed only by the Senior Minister. Any concerns with the results of a background check will be shared with confidentially with the appropriate staff member.
- a. Paid staff members must have their background securely checked and their previous employment checked.
- b. Ministry servants and staff must provide written acknowledgement of the Safe Sanctuaries policy and agreement to adhere to it.
- c. Upon completion of Safe Sanctuary training and clearance of a background check, the ministry servant will be given Safe Sanctuary authorization in the ACS database.
- d. Authorization expires after three years, upon which ministry servants must take and pass the Safe Sanctuary module again and have their background securely checked again.
- e. Volunteers in supervisory roles must be members of Dilworth Church for at least six months prior to serving in this capacity. Volunteers may serve in assistant roles prior to this threshold.

## **2. Age Requirements**

- a. Adult staff and volunteers working with children or youth must be at least three years older than the oldest child/youth being supervised. No one under the age of 18 will be given supervisory capacity; supervisors must be at least five years older than the oldest child/youth being supervised.

## **3. Supervision**

- a. Two unrelated adults (18 years or older) must be scheduled to be in a room with vulnerable populations at all times. No child or youth should be alone with one adult at a time.
- b. In the rare circumstance where it is not possible to have two adults in the room, a roaming adult must be present and the door must be left open.
- c. At least one adult present at every church activity should be certified in basic first aid and CPR.

## **4. The Environment**

- a. Every room that is used for ministry with vulnerable populations should have a window in the door, or a half door, that gives visibility to all areas of that room. The window must be left uncovered. If there is no window, the door must be left open at all times.
- b. All equipment used on church grounds and used by the church must be examined for the appropriateness and safety of usage in the nursery, classrooms, playground, etc.
- c. Adequate liability coverage for both activities of the church family, both on and off premises, should be maintained. The staff and Ministries Council should know what coverage Dilworth Church has for sexual misconduct.

## **5. Transportation**

- a. Once a youth is on church grounds, they may not drive to any off-grounds church-sponsored event or transport others.
- b. For all trips, there will be at least an 8:1 ratio of adults to children/youth.
- c. Two adults should be in every vehicle used for transportation of children/youth. If this is not possible, written parental consent should be obtained prior to transportation.
- d. Any adult responsible for transporting children and youth will show their current driver's license, proof of insurance policy, and registration to the activity leader prior to any event requiring driving.
- e. For overnight accommodations, adults will not ever sleep alone with a member of a vulnerable population in a room. When traveling, adult chaperones must reserve separate rooms from unrelated children or youth. Only children/youth of the same sex are allowed to sleep in the same room, unless related. If sleeping in an open space in a church, divide the boys from the girls and be sure the chaperones are located near doors and between the boys and the girls. It is appropriate at an all-girls or all-boys event to have the same sex chaperones only. However, at any event where there will be boys and girls sleeping, there must be both male and female chaperones.

## **6. Social Media**

- a. Staff and volunteers must utilize discretion when posting to social media, ensuring that each post, comment, and interaction is consistent with being "a sign of Christ's love for the world."
- b. Written parental permission must be obtained prior to posting any photos posted to social media containing faces of children and/or youth. This includes events both on and off Dilworth Church property. Last names and identifying information should never be used. If possible, the "save as" feature should be disabled for all pictures posted.

## **7. Allegations of Misconduct**

- a. If there is an allegation of sexual misconduct, the Senior Minister and Lay Leader will be notified immediately.
- b. The Senior Minister will decide the steps that will be taken including contacting the District Superintendent and the WNCN Conference Director of Communications for assistance.
- c. Dilworth Church will notify the proper law enforcement agency, the Western North Carolina Conference of the UMC, the insurance agency, and the attorney. Written records of all steps taken by the church will be kept.
- d. All efforts will be made to cooperate fully with the authorities.
- e. The current Lay Leader shall be the designated representative of the congregation to speak to the media. No other members of the congregation should disclose information to the media except for the current Lay Leader.
- f. There will be a prepared statement before releasing any information to the media.
- g. Every allegation will be taken seriously. We will not justify, explain away, place blame, or accuse anyone. We will not confront the accused abuser with anger or hostility.
- h. The accused individual will be removed from the situation immediately.

- i. Steps will be taken to assure the individual's safety until the parents, guardians, or family have arrived.

## **8. Guests on the Property**

- a. Any guests and/or renting tenants utilizing Dilworth Church facilities must provide written acknowledgement of the presence of Dilworth Church's Safe Sanctuaries policy and written consent to adhere to the policy, prior to utilizing Dilworth Church facilities.

## **9. Emotional Safe Sanctuary**

- a. Dilworth Church affirms and celebrates that the Kingdom of God includes persons of all races, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, ages, social and economic status, mental and physical abilities, and those with and without homes.
- b. Therefore, every child of God is welcome in this congregation and we do not discriminate against any group in our midst. We invite everyone to join us on our journey as we practice loving acceptance and celebration of each person and respectful discussion of our differences.
- c. Each ministry servant who serves with vulnerable populations at Dilworth Church agrees to uphold this belief in their speech and actions towards others, especially those that they do not agree with.

## **10. Communication of Safe Sanctuaries Policy**

- a. Dilworth Church visitors, members, ministry servants, and staff will be made aware of the existence of Safe Sanctuary policy through written communication including posted signs in ministry environments, ministry servant trainings, ministry servant handbooks, announcements in the bulletin, parent communication, and the website.
- b. Revisions to the Safe Sanctuary policy shall be brought to and approved by the Ministries Council, and communicated to the congregation upon approval.

## **Conclusion**

In all of our ministries, this congregation is committed to demonstrating 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" (from the Baptismal Covenant we share together each time we baptize a person).

For more information on this policy, please contact Rev. Cade Barefoot (cade.barefoot@dilworthchurch.org).