

Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Preamble

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

‘If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.’” (Matthew 18:5-6)

When the disciples tried to keep children away from Jesus, he instructed them to let them come. Jesus welcomed and included children and lifted them up as examples to the faithful. He warned against putting anything in their path that would cause them to stumble.

The church continues to welcome children, knowing that for some it may be the only place where they will experience God’s unconditional love and grace. As Christians, we take our responsibilities to children and youth very seriously. When we neglect to take adequate precautions to protect them from abuse while in our care, we fail in our responsibilities as Christians. It is unlikely that we can completely prevent child abuse in every situation, but we are committed to providing as safe and secure an environment for all children and those who participate in the ministries and activities sponsored by our church as possible.

This policy will be posted in the nursery, Sunday school office, and any room utilized for youth ministries.

Sanctuaries:

Psalms 20:1-2, 27:4-5 provides examples of how sanctuary is to be a community of protective nurture and harmony. As Christians we are called to create and provide a safe sanctuary in our church to ensure that it is a holy, safe and protective place, provided for all of God’s children, regardless of age or ability. The following policy *is not based upon a lack of trust for those within*, but is intended to protect our children, youth, workers, employees, volunteers and the whole church body. To accomplish this, careful and confidential documentation is essential to show compliance with policies, to verify information as needed, and to have an accurate record in case of an incident.

Authority:

This policy may be amended or changed only by majority vote of the Hinshaw Church Council. This vote may only be taken during an official Church Council Meeting and be documented in the Church Council Meeting minutes.

Review and Revision:

This policy will be reviewed by the SPRC and Education Committees annually. Proposed revisions shall be submitted in writing to the chairperson of one of these committees.

Standards:

In order to ensure a high standard of protection for the members of Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church, rules and standards concerning conduct of operations and standards for the church will be enacted and in effect for all activities involving the youth of the church.

Definitions:

For this policy, the following definitions will apply:

Abuse means harm or threatened harm to the health and welfare of an adult with special needs, a child, or youth by any person responsible for the health and welfare of an adult with special needs, a child or youth, that occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or mistreatment, sexual harassment, sexual contact, sexual molestation; disseminating, exhibiting, or displaying sexually explicit material.

Adult means any person at least 18 years of age.

Appropriate means conduct that one would reasonably assume would be acceptable and permissible by a child's parent or guardian.

Child, Children or Youth refer to a person less than 18 years of age.

Custodian is any non-parent who has physical custody of a child under a court order.

Leader means anyone directly responsible for supervising and overseeing the specific Church related function, event or activity.

Parent, guardian or custodian means any parent, stepparent, foster parent, grandparent or guardian appointed by the court with the general responsibility for the health, education, or welfare of a child or adult with special needs.

Response Team means all persons, individually or collectively, who are appointed by the SPRC chairperson to serve for the purpose of investigating and responding to allegations or misconduct.

Sexual abuse means engaging in any sexual contact, sexual penetrations, sexual exploitations, sexual harassment of an adult with special needs, or child, or youth; or the dissemination, exhibiting, or displaying of sexually explicit material to an adult with special needs, or child, or youth, regardless of whether such conduct is with or without the knowledge or consent of the adult with special needs, or child, or youth. This abuse may be violent or nonviolent. It includes any conduct that involves adults with special needs or children in sexual behavior for which they are not personally, socially, emotionally or developmentally ready.

Sexual contact means the intentional touching of the intimate parts of the clothing covering the immediate area of the intimate parts of a youth, child or adult with special needs.

Sexual exploitation means allowing, permitting or encouraging an adult with special needs or child or youth to engage in prostitution or in the photographing, filming, creating electronic- or computer-generated images or other forms of depicting a child, youth or adult with special needs engaged in actual or suggestive sexual conduct.

Sexual harassment means any advance or demand, either verbal or physical, which is perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive.

Good Faith is defined as information based upon personal observations, facts known to the reporting person, statements made by a victim to the reporting person, admissions made by the perpetrator that is not motivated by any other reason than a desire to comply with the law and/or provide help for the victim.

Screening Process:

- All paid staff will complete an employment application and be interviewed
- All volunteers will complete a Volunteer Information Form, be interviewed by the Programs/Youth Director, and screened for suitability.
- Volunteers working with children (birth to 18) must regularly attend Hinshaw Memorial UMC before they are eligible to work in an area where they will have direct contact with children.
- No one shall serve if she/he is known previously to have been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest to any crime or any act or conduct involving sexual abuse, or any act or guilty conduct which is of a sexual, molesting, seductive, or criminally deviant nature, whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes, but is not limited to, crimes involving pedophilic behavior (molestation of a pre-adolescent child), incest, rape, assaults involving adults with special needs, murder, kidnapping, pornography, and the physical abuse of an adult with special needs

- No one shall serve as a care provider who has had a verdict or judgment rendered against him or her in any civil action arising out of any personal act of conduct related to sexual abuse of an adult with special needs or child. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the civil verdict occurred and judgment was rendered.

Screening Responsibilities:

- The Pastor and/or a representative from the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) will be responsible for screening all paid staff employees.
- The Youth/Programs Director is responsible for screening all Sunday school and Children's programs volunteers. The Program/Youth Director is responsible for screening all Vacation Bible School volunteers. The Youth/Programs Director is responsible for all volunteers within the Youth programming area. The Programs/Youth Director has discretion as to the suitability of any volunteer.
- Outside groups not screened by Hinshaw Memorial UMC are responsible for ensuring their staff and volunteers are familiar with our Safe Sanctuary policy.

Screening Procedures:

The persons noted above will be responsible for receiving, reviewing, confirming, and processing employment or volunteer applications.

- References will be requested on all paid staff positions and it will be left to the discretion of the screeners (noted above) to follow up on specific references listed for clarification of any apparent issues.
- A check for arrest and convictions records will be made for all applicable people, performed by the person noted above. For the purpose of this section, the church will base any decisions only on the disposition (final outcome) of the case.
- The maintenance of such documents shall reside in a locked file or cabinet in the vault in the church office. All volunteer files will be treated as a personnel file and protected to the same degree of confidentiality as paid employees.

Supervision:

- The Orientation/Training Session is a requirement for all staff persons and volunteers in charge of children's activities. This training will cover church policies to prevent child abuse, appropriate steps to report an incident of abuse, and details of state laws regarding child abuse. Initial training will be coordinated

by the Safe Sanctuary Task Force. Ongoing training will be offered on a quarterly basis by the Education Committee.

- Basic CPR and First Aid training will be made available to all volunteers and staff. Each member of the staff is required to complete this training.
- Whenever reasonable, minimum supervisory standards will include the “two-adult rule” during any church-sponsored program, event or ministry involving children or youth. This indicates that no matter the size of the group, there will be two supervising adults present. When this is not possible, an adult roamer will visit the room periodically. Persons under the age of 18 will be partnered with another adult and not supervised only by a roamer.
- An adult in a leadership role with youth must:
 - Be over 18 years of age;
 - Be five years older than the youth with whom he/she is working;
 - Be 21 or older to drive with youth as passengers (unless there is an emergency).
- No worker under the age of 18 will have sole responsibility, nor be alone with any children.
- Each room or space where children are being cared for shall have an eye-level window in the door or the door shall be left open. All activities should occur in open view.
- Registration materials for activities in which children are outside of the direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require signed written permission forms that include general health information in order to participate. All information will be kept confidential.
- The church nursery will require all parents to sign their child in for events, according to the church nursery policy.

The North Carolina law involving reporting situations of possible/suspected child abuse.

§ 7B-301. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment.

Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be made orally, by telephone, or in writing. The report shall include information as is known to the person making it including the name and address of the juvenile; the name and address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or caretaker; the age of the juvenile; the names and ages of other juveniles in the home; the present whereabouts of the juvenile if not at the home address; the nature and

extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse, neglect, or dependency; and any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the need for protective services or court intervention. If the report is made orally or by telephone, the person making the report shall give the person's name, address, and telephone number. Refusal of the person making the report to give a name shall not preclude the department's investigation of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of maltreatment.

Upon receipt of any report of sexual abuse of the juvenile in a child care facility, the director shall notify the State Bureau of Investigation within 24 hours or on the next workday. If sexual abuse in a child care facility is not alleged in the initial report, but during the course of the investigation there is reason to suspect that sexual abuse has occurred, the director shall immediately notify the State Bureau of Investigation. Upon notification that sexual abuse may have occurred in a child care facility, the State Bureau of Investigation may form a task force to investigate the report.

(1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 923, s. 2; 1993, c. 516, s. 4; 1997-506, s. 32; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60.)

The provisions of this law will be adhered to at all times.

If an incident of child abuse is alleged, it is crucial that it be dealt with **immediately and in a clearly outlined manner.** The person who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to the person in charge of the children's activity, who shall notify Children's Protective Service, law enforcement (CPS) AND the pastor or the pastor's designee and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chairman as soon as possible. The Pastor and /or the chairman Staff-Parish Relations Committee will notify the District Superintendent by the beginning of the next working day.

- If the allegation concerns activities or persons outside any relationship to a church related event or activity, it is the responsibility of the person in charge of that event or activity to notify CPS. However if this has not happened, and the disclosure is to a member of Hinshaw Memorial UMC, volunteer, employee or any other person, that person will notify CPS and contact the Pastor immediately.
- Persons who are the objects of the report will be required to refrain from all children's activities until an administrative decision is reached by Children's Protective Services.
- Care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.
- A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in a children's activity, all volunteers or staff involved in that activity shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.

- This policy prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports allegations of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct or assists in investigating charges. Anyone found to have participated in retaliatory actions will be confronted by the SPRC and appropriate action will be taken, which may include termination as a volunteer or employee of Hinshaw Memorial UMC. Likewise, anyone found to have made a malicious false report of allegations will be confronted by the SPRC and appropriate action will be taken, which may include termination as a volunteer or employee.

**"Good Faith", Is defined as information based upon personal observations, facts known to the reporting person, statements made by a victim to the reporting person, admissions made by the perpetrator and is not motivated by any other reason than a desire to comply with the law and/or provide help for the victim.*

- The Pastor, or his/her designee, is the only person(s) authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. At no time will the name of the alleged victim or person alleging the abuse be given out. The name of the person who is named as the perpetrator may be given out **only after criminal charges have been filed and that person has been arrested for the incident.** Even then, only the fact that the person has been arrested will be made public. At all times the Pastor or his designee will present an impartial view and make no conclusion to the media or any other person or organization regarding the facts of the case or potential outcome of the case. Any public release of information to be made will first be cleared with the investigating officers of CPS and/or the investigating law enforcement agency.
- If allegations are made against the Pastor, the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee shall be contacted immediately and shall act as the pastor's designee until an administrative decision is reached by CPS.

Appropriate Discipline:

Children and youth must be made aware that appropriate behavior is expected at all church and church-related functions. When dealing with children and youth, gentle reminders will usually be necessary. When these reminders do not work then discipline needs to be moved to the next step. When behavior has to be addressed, the designated leaders of the event will handle it. A reasonable response might include a "time out" and/or notification of the parent(s)/guardian/custodian of the situation.

In no case will physical discipline ever be an appropriate measure for dealing with any discipline problem.

For serious offenses, the appropriate response will be to send the child home immediately.

ATTACHMENT A:

HINSHAW MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**POLICY STATEMENT ON SEXUAL AND GENDER HARASSMENT,
MISCONDUCT OF A SEXUAL NATURE, AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

I. Church Statement

Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church believes that sexual abuse and sexual misconduct within the ministerial relationship and sexual harassment within the church are incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing. All human beings, both male and female, are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ. As the promise of Galatians 3:26-29, states all are one in Christ, we support equity among all persons without regard to ethnicity, situation, or gender

Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church prohibits any form of sexual harassment of the staff or congregation and guarantees the staff and congregation an environment free from these behaviors. Each member the staff and congregation of Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church is responsible for establishing the parameters of his or her own social behavior

II Definitions:

A. Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment is a form of gender discrimination. It is defined as the repeated deliberate, unsolicited, and unwelcome verbal and/or physical conduct of a sexual nature or with sexual implications by a worker, a supervisor, or a higher authority. Single overt acts which are intended to coerce sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, employment or salary of an employee or applicant are sexual harassment for the purposes of this policy.

Sexual Harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender.

Sexual Harassment is behavior that is harassing in nature against a female because she is a female or against a male because he is a male.

Examples of Sexual Harassment:

- (1) Submission is either an explicit or implicit condition of employment;
- (2) Submission or rejection is used as a basis for an employment decision;

- (3) The conduct has interfered with and affected a person's work performance or has created an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment; or
- (4) The conduct is sufficiently distasteful or repetitious as to cause embarrassment to the affected person.

B. Sexual Abuse/Sexual Assault

Sexual Abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker or volunteer. Sexual Abuse within the ministerial relationship involves a betrayal of sacred trust, a violation of the ministerial role and exploitation of those who are vulnerable.

III. Reporting

It is the policy of Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church to provide a safe and secure worship environment. Sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse and misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interfere with its moral mission. Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors, which are sinful, demeaning, abusive and wrong. Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any complaint of sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse or misconduct of a sexual nature within the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with the *Book of Discipline*. Further, Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free of these sins and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ.

Some instances of harassment can be resolved informally by conversation between the parties or facilitated mediation. In all other instances, the conduct must be reported immediately to the chair, co-chair or any other member of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) and the pastor in charge. If the conduct involves the pastor in charge or another clergy person, it must be reported to the District Superintendent or the Bishop as soon as possible.

Nothing within this policy shall relieve the staff or congregation or any other person associated with Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church of the legal responsibility to report child abuse allegations to the Guilford County Department of Social Services without delay as required by the provisions of North Carolina General Statutes 7B-301 and 7B-302.

Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church will not retaliate against any person who brings forward a "Good Faith" complaint. All staff and congregation members are expected to immediately report any knowledge of harassment, abuse or misconduct to any one of the persons listed above. Prompt and appropriate investigation and corrective

action will be taken, including discipline. Persons willfully making false allegations may be disciplined.

IV. Confidentiality

In cases of sexual harassment, Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. The church will make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality by disclosing information on a “need to know” basis and as necessary to promote God’s call for justice, reconciliation and healing.

In cases of sexual abuse or sexual assault, no public disclosure of information will be made regarding the victim, witnesses or person(s) making the complaint. No disclosure of information regarding the accused will be made until after the accused has been formally charged with a crime by the courts.

Violations of the confidentiality rules will be disciplined by the church, and may subject the person making the violation to civil liability.

V. Domestic Violence

North Carolina law provides for the establishment of a protective order by the courts to prevent a partner in a domestic relationship from becoming a victim of violence by another partner in that relationship. These orders are signed into effect by a judge and are referred to as “50-B” orders. 50-B orders prevent a partner in a personal relationship from harassing or coming into the presence of the other partner.

In a 50-B order the following definitions apply:

- (1) Plaintiff: The person seeking the order for protection against the;
- (2) Respondent: The person whom the order protects the plaintiff against.

Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church is committed to providing a worship environment that is violence-free. When it is known that such an order exists, any violations of that order will be reported by the church to the appropriate law enforcement agency immediately. The report may be made by any staff member or congregant of the church. A violation occurs when the respondent comes upon any church property and includes the lawn, parking lot and all structures on the property when prohibited by the order.

Persons attending Hinshaw Memorial United Methodist Church who are under the protection of a 50-B order and wish for the church to assist in providing a safe place of worship should provide a copy of the order to the church secretary. The secretary will notify the pastor. He will ensure that the PPRC and staff are informed and the ushers at the Sunday worship services are also made aware of the existence of the order. Ushers and staff observing the respondent entering church property will inform the respondent

that his/her presence may be a violation of the order and that they are required to report the violations. They will not engage in any physical confrontation with the respondent. They will report the violation to the appropriate law enforcement agency without delay.

