

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Area(s) in which I would live to serve (please circle): Children    Youth    Vulnerable Adults



**Trenholm Road**  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# **SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY**

## INTRODUCTION

Trenholm Road United Methodist Church is committed to maintaining a safe environment for every child, youth, and vulnerable adult involved in its program ministry or in activities located at, connected with, or sponsored by Trenholm Road. In response to growing public concern over the safety and welfare of young people and vulnerable adults, Trenholm Road, like many other United Methodist Churches, has established an Abuse Prevention Policy. Trenholm Road affirms the right of children, youth, and vulnerable adults to be protected from sexual/physical abuse and neglect and the right of volunteers and staff to be protected from allegations of abuse and neglect.

This document, background check forms, training materials and additional information may be found online at [www.trenholmroad.org](http://www.trenholmroad.org)

This policy was endorsed and adopted by the Church Council of Trenholm Road United Methodist Church in August 2023.

Questions and comments should be directed to:

Ashlea Cox, Director of Children and Family Ministries      [ashlea@trumc.org](mailto:ashlea@trumc.org)  
Or  
Linda Collins, Director of Student Ministries                      [youth@trumc.org](mailto:youth@trumc.org)

3401 Trenholm Road, Columbia SC 29204                      Phone: 803.254.6695

## THE NEED FOR A PREVENTION POLICY

“With God’s help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.”

*Services of the Baptismal Covenant*, The United Methodist Book of Worship

“Jesus also said ‘if any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...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 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

*Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church*, Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church

We are mandated by God and by our commitment to the Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church to ensure the safety and protection of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Through educating and training all adults working with

children/youth/vulnerable adults and through the implementation of this child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse prevention policy Trenholm Road United Methodist Church aims to ensure the safety and protection of all.

## APPLICATION OF POLICY

This policy applies to all adults, including clergy, paid staff, vendors, and volunteers, who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults at Trenholm Road United Methodist Church or through Trenholm Road United Methodist Church ("TRUMC") ministries or activities, both onsite and offsite.

## DEFINITIONS

- Adult Leader - an individual age eighteen or older who serves as a leader of a program or ministry involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults at Trenholm Road United Methodist Church.
- Child - an individual from birth through age eleven or otherwise defined as infant through 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Youth - an individual from age twelve through age seventeen or otherwise defined as 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Vulnerable Adult – a person eighteen years or older who has a physical or mental condition which substantially impairs the person from adequately providing his or her own care or protection. This includes a person who is impaired in the ability to adequately provide for the person's own care or protection because of infirmities of aging including, but not limited to, organic brain damage, advanced age, and physical, mental, or emotional dysfunction.
- Physical Abuse - deliberate and intentional bodily harm caused to an individual.
- Sexual Abuse - sexual contact between a child/youth/vulnerable adult and an adult or unwanted sexual conduct between children/youth/vulnerable adults. Examples of sexual abuse include but are not limited to: fondling; intercourse; cunnilingus; fellatio; anal intercourse; any intrusion, however slight of any part of a person's body or of any object into the genital or anal openings of another person's body, incest, exposure to pornography, and inappropriate sexual comments.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR, AND SCREENING OF, STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

1. Adult leaders must be approved vendors, staff, or members of TRUMC who have been actively participating in worship or other ministries for at least six months before they can work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
2. All adult leaders (paid or unpaid) are to be trained on this policy and must sign an agreement to comply with the policy prior to working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
3. TRUMC shall conduct a background check on adult leaders prior to involvement with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults that will use a generally recognized

search company to query criminal history, including felonies, misdemeanors, sexual offenses, and where permitted, felony traffic offenses.

4. Each year any adult that works with children, youth or vulnerable adults must complete training in the TRUMC Safe Sanctuary policy, sign an agreement to comply, and complete the background check.

A person who has been accused or charged with child/youth/vulnerable adult sexual or physical abuse requires further scrutiny before being allowed to work with children/youth/vulnerable adults. Automatic disqualifiers include criminal conviction for child sexual abuse, physical abuse, or assault on a minor, incest, rape, murder, kidnapping, child pornography, sodomy, criminal domestic violence, and other similar criminal offenses.

The business office will keep confidentiality of all collected information of adult leaders.

## GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULTS

Children, youth, and vulnerable adults participating in programs and activities, both on and off the campus, and in programs operated by others on church property should be free to do so without intimidation, coercion, or abuse of any type.

The “Two Adult” rule will be followed whenever reasonably possible:

- There will be two or more adult leaders present at any activity involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- When working with children or youth the two adults present must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child or youth present. When working with children in the nursery setting, two trained nursery assistants and or one trained nursery assistant and one adult leader must be present. An adult leader above the age of 21 must always be on site.
- Ministries and activities will be planned with the intent of always carrying out the “two-adult” rule. TRUMPS After School Care Program is excluded from this two-adult rule as they are instead required to follow DSS guidelines and ratios.
- A married couple will count as one adult leader when working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.
- Trained nursery assistant: a youth at least 16 years of age that has received nursery and Safe Sanctuary training from the Director of Children and Family Ministries. A trained nursery assistant gives help to and is directed by an adult leader.

Ensuring Safety when engaging in Physical Contact with a child/youth or vulnerable adult:

Physical contact should always be initiated by the child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Examples of contact that should be avoided include but are not limited to:

Unsolicited hugging or kissing, prolonged touching or tickling, sitting on laps, forceful play or wrestling, carrying or picking up when not initiated by the child, and personal grooming.

In circumstances where only one adult is present with a child/youth/vulnerable adult:

- Two or more children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults must be present.
- The activity must take place in a room that is visible to passersby through a window or open door.
- The activity is subject to unannounced visits by church staff, ministers, and/or parents or legal guardians.
- All one-on-one meetings are to be in visible places with others present or nearby.

When taking children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults to the restroom, the adult leader should remain outside the restroom. If supervision or assistance is required inside the restroom, the door should remain open. An adult should change a child's diaper in full view of another adult present.

Confidentiality of information from a child, youth, and/or vulnerable adult does not extend to situations where one could possibly be harmed or could harm someone else.

Offsite Activities (Pertaining to Transportation):

- In situations where children, youth, or vulnerable adults are traveling in a caravan to an event, only one adult leader per vehicle is required, as long as the vehicles stay in clear view of each other. Two or more children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults must be in each vehicle if only one adult leader is present.
- TRUMPS After School Care Program will follow transportation guidelines and ratios set forth by DSS.
- During a TRUMC event where transportation is provided to and from an offsite location, all youth must ride in a church bus and/or a vehicle of a safe sanctuary trained adult leader.
- No youth is permitted to drive his or her own personal vehicle from the church to the location.
- Youth who are able to drive may meet the participants at the offsite location but are not permitted to drive other youth back to the church if the youth had previously ridden in church transportation to the event.

Activities Pertaining to Sleeping Arrangements:

Acceptable sleeping arrangements that utilize *hotel style* accommodations:

- One adult leader may sleep in a room with no less than two youth. The adult leader cannot share a bed, sleeping bag, blanket, couch with a youth, and there must always be two youth in the room with the adult leader.
- Youth may sleep in a room with no adult leaders in situations in which there are youth only rooms and adult leader only rooms. There will be no more than four youth in one room, and no less than two youth in one room.
- Same gendered adult leaders and same gendered youth will always sleep in the

same room. Married couples are to sleep separately from one another throughout the duration of the trip.

Acceptable sleeping arrangements that utilize *cabin style* and *gym style* accommodations:

- Youth and adult leaders will sleep in an open area that has clear visibility at all times.
- There will be a clearly defined youth sleeping section and a clearly defined, separate, adult leader sleeping section.
- The male youth section and female youth section will be clearly separate from one another.
- The male adult leader section and female adult leader section will be clearly separate from one another.

## GUIDELINES FOR CYBER SAFETY

TRUMC seeks to use the utmost integrity and discretion in communicating through email, instant messaging, phone or video conversation, texting, or sending data to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by computer, PDA, or cell phone. Our safety policy is outlined below.

### Permission from a Legal Guardian:

TRUMC will receive advance, written permission from a legal guardian prior to:

- Posting photos of participants on any official TRUMC websites, social media, or sending them through e-mail or cell phone messages or making videos for any use.
- Sharing of any full name or contact information.

### Guidelines for Communications with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults:

Adult leaders must use the following guidelines:

- All digital information will be delivered as a group or with a Safe Sanctuaries-trained leader added. There will be no one-on-one digital communication between an adult and an individual child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- If communicating by email, do not use “broadcast” emails. Use the “BCC” (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.
- Save all confidential cyber-communications had with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- Supervisors may contact paid, trained nursery assistants individually for work purposes.
- Conduct all communication in a professional manner.
- It is recommended that digital communication occurs via platforms that can be documented, stored for a minimum of 5 years, and accessed by all adults in ministry with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

- All communications via direct messaging on social media platforms and websites via chat options should be archived, for a minimum of 5 years, via those platforms for accountability purposes.

Safety Measures for Sharing Photos Electronically:

- Permission from a legal guardian will be received prior to use of photos.
- When posting photos, refrain from using names or identifiable information.
- No child, youth, or vulnerable adult will be tagged. TRUMC leaders may only be tagged with consent.

Safety Measures for Using Social Networking Sites:

- Adult leaders are encouraged to set privacy settings to limit view of your profile.
- Adult leaders of TRUMC will agree not to submit or accept a received “friend requests” of children/youth/vulnerable adults.
- Church leaders and adult leaders will avoid relationships with children/youth/vulnerable adults via social networking sites, unless an actual relationship (family friendship, etc.) already exists between them.
- Nothing will be posted to a TRUMC social networking site that could not be attached to a person’s resume or printed in the church bulletin or newsletter.
- Children/youth/vulnerable adults will be encouraged to follow these same guidelines.

Administration of Official TRUMC Social Media Groups

- Each TRUMC social media site, group, or page will have a minimum of two unrelated administrators, who are either church leaders or adult leaders engaged in the ministry.
- Sites will be monitored frequently to allow for quick responses in the event urgent or crisis concerns are posted.
- TRUMC will act as quickly as possible to remove or to not post inappropriate comments, photos, etc.
- Photos will be checked for vulnerable/compromising situations and will be used only to uphold our mission.
- Social Media sites are to be created and monitored only by TRUMC adult leaders or staff. No site, page or other social media contact page may be created by a child or youth. If sites are discovered, they are to be immediately taken down. TRUMC adult leaders are responsible for ensuring that children and youth are aware of this rule.
- Church email addresses and church digital platforms are to be used only for church-related matters – never for personal conversations.

## Glossary for Cyber Safety

- Digital Platforms – Any social media or online spaces that can be created for interaction. Examples: Facebook, Instagram, GroupMe, Remind, Church Website, WhatsApp, TikTok and Twitter.
- Digital Communications – Any information shared electronically. Examples: Email and text services (direct messaging), phone calls and digital publications such as newsletters and bulletins.

Any inappropriate material posted to a church related social media site, group, or page will be deleted and addressed through the appropriate steps in “Reporting Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse & Neglect.”

## REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE & NEGLECT AT TRUMC SPONSORED ACTIVITY

If a suspected incident of abuse or neglect occurs at TRUMC or is disclosed to an adult leader at a TRUMC sponsored activity, the following procedures will take place. If the Pastor is suspected of abuse or neglect, the procedures outlined in Section C shall be followed.

- A. The adult who observed the abuse or neglect or who received the information shall:
1. Ensure the safety of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
  2. Complete a “Report of Suspected Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Abuse” form (see appendix and available on-line at: [trenholmroad.org](http://trenholmroad.org)) and provide a copy to the Pastor and SPRC chairperson.
  3. Make a report to law enforcement and DSS if the suspected abuse or neglect is by a parent or guardian or report to law enforcement if the suspected abuse is by another individual.
- B. The Pastor or the Pastor’s designee will:
1. Notify the parent or guardian of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult if the parent or guardian is not the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect.
  2. Remove the alleged perpetrator of the abuse and/or neglect from his/her role until the investigation is completed.
  3. Inform TRUMC’s insurance company.
  4. Work with the District Superintendent to decide what information should be shared with lay leadership and how it should be shared. An additional plan should be made regarding what information should be shared with the congregation and how it should be shared. The District Superintendent and Pastor should not disclose the name or identifying information about the alleged victim unless the parent or guardian of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult expressly authorizes it.
  5. Assign one person designated to talk with media if necessary.
- C. The procedures outlined below shall be followed if the Pastor is suspected or



accused of abuse (including sexual abuse) or neglect.

1. The adult who observed the abuse or neglect or who received the information shall:
  - a. Ensure the safety of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
  - b. Fill out a "Report of Suspected Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Abuse" form (see appendix and available on-line at: [trenholmroad.org](http://trenholmroad.org)) and provide a copy to the chairperson of SPRC.
  - c. Make a report to law enforcement and DSS if the Pastor is the parent or legal guardian of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult. If the Pastor is not the parent or legal guardian of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult it should be reported to law enforcement.
2. The SPRC Chairperson will notify the District Superintendent.
3. The District Superintendent will notify the Bishop.
4. The Bishop and District Superintendent will decide together whether the Pastor will be taken out of pulpit until investigation is completed and resolved.
5. The Bishop will release the Conference Response team to assist the church with navigating the next steps.

### REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE & NEGLECT OUTSIDE OF TRUMC SPONSORED ACTIVITIES OR EVENTS

If an adult leader becomes aware of, or suspects, an incident of abuse or neglect that has occurred/is occurring outside of TRUMC sponsored activities or events, the adult should follow South Carolina law concerning the reporting of such abuse:

- South Carolina Department of Social Services (if suspected abuse is by parent or guardian)
- Law Enforcement (if suspected abuse is by another individual)

S.C. Code Annotated Sections 63-7-20 and 63-7-310 set out the requirements in full. Clergy, counselors and childcare workers in a childcare center have affirmative duties to report abuse.

## AFFIRMATION OF SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

Initial each of the following items:

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and I understand everything presented in this policy, including the dangers of child abuse/neglect.

\_\_\_\_\_ I affirm that I have never been charged, accused, convicted, or named in any legal proceedings in regard to any type of abuse, assault, neglect or any other criminal activity involving children.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I must pass a criminal background before I am allowed to volunteer or work with children, youth or vulnerable adults through Trenholm Road United Methodist Church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Adult Leader Full Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Adult Leader Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Report of Suspected Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Abuse

1. Victim's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Victim's Age and Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date, Time, and Location of incident/initial conversation with/or report from victim \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Victim's Statement (give detailed summary here – continue on the back of this page as needed): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Name of person accused of abuse \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

5. A copy of this form should be given to the Minister and the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

Minister's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson SPRC's Name \_\_\_\_\_

6. Full Name of Person Completing this Form \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Person Completing Form \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time the Report was Completed \_\_\_\_\_