

**Safe Sanctuary Policy of Soapstone United Methodist Church  
Adopted by Church Council. Updated March 1, 2026**

**History and Introduction**

In 1996, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. Soapstone UMC, in covenant with congregations across our connection, worked diligently and faithfully to create a Safe Sanctuary policy to fulfill this mandate. We put practices and procedures in place to equip us in living out this policy and to empower us in fulfilling our congregational vow to nurture one another, found in the United Methodist Baptismal Covenant I:

**With God's help we will proclaim the good news and  
live according to the example of Christ.**

**We will surround these persons  
with a community of love and forgiveness, that  
they may grow in their trust of God,  
and be found faithful in their service to others.**

**We will pray for them, that  
they may be true disciples  
who walk in the way that leads to life.**

The most current knowledge and awareness of how sexual abuse, exploitation, neglect, and adverse childhood experiences occur in different circumstances and what that means for our children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our church family is the catalyst for the 2026 policy updates. May it help us walk together with integrity and conviction and in ways that lead to trust in God, faithful service to one another, love and abundant life.

**Guiding Vision, Mission, and Implementation**

Our Safe Sanctuary program is an overt expression of our commitment to ensuring that Soapstone UMC is a safe place where children, youth, and other vulnerable people may experience the abiding love of God and fellowship within the community of faith.

We will work together to ensure that Soapstone UMC is:

- A safe space where everyone may experience an unwavering devotion to the physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being of our children, youth, and other vulnerable people in our midst.
- A trustworthy space committed to equipping and entrusting our volunteers for faithful service with our children, youth, and other vulnerable people.
- A brave space of love and belonging where children, youth, and other vulnerable people may experience LGTBQIA inclusion<sup>1</sup>, abilities inclusion<sup>2</sup>, and mental health and cognitive abilities inclusion<sup>3</sup>.
- An open, honest space where boundaries (what is acceptable and what is not) and accountability are a normative act of compassion that safeguards against potential harmful actions that are subjective, personal, and rumored.<sup>4</sup>

We will accomplish this by:

- Updating our policy, practices, and procedures in a format that is clearly and easily understood so that Soapstone UMC members may readily commit to faithfully following them with love and integrity.
- Bringing all information to everyone's attention in a variety of ways, appropriate to setting.
- Requesting feedback and suggestions from those, who in their own work and/or personal experience, have important wisdom and knowledge to share.
- Recruiting church leaders who are specifically committed to oversight and:
  - equipping and entrusting volunteers through training and resources.
  - upholding our boundaries by providing clear expectations about what is and is not acceptable
  - safeguarding the reputation and character of our volunteers
  - holding everyone in our ministry with children, youth, and vulnerable adults accountable to our policy and to our baptismal vows
  - making sure that all important record keeping and audits are taking place and being maintained
- Being diligent about program ministries having:
  - correct volunteer to participant ratios
  - trained volunteers
  - opportunities for inviting and receiving regular feedback
  - clear and confidential reporting of observed or suspected incidents of Safe Sanctuary violations

## Key Terms and Definitions

It is impossible to responsibly address all levels of sexual abuse, exploitation, neglect, and adverse childhood experiences. Below are key terms and definitions so that everyone may take responsibility for growing in knowledge and understanding.

**Adult** – An adult is a person of 18 years of age or older. An 18-year-old still in high school or a recent high school graduate during the summer following the senior year is a youth for church program purposes.

**Adult Event** – A meeting, class, or activity designed specifically for persons over the age of eighteen.

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** – a collection of potentially traumatic events, such as violence, abuse, or neglect, that occur in childhood.<sup>5</sup>

**Child** – A child is a person of less than 18 years of age or an adult with diminished mental capacity who is appropriately placed in programs for youth or children. In this policy, “child” and “children” usually refer to those under 6th grade, as opposed to “youth” in 6th-12th grade.

**Child Care** – A room or area where children are kept and supervised by a paid or volunteer caregiver while a parent attends an adult event.

**Children’s Event** – A meeting, class, or activity designed specifically for children from birth through the fifth grade.

**Event** - An event is a meeting, class, or other activity that appears on the Soapstone UMC Calendar. An event will typically begin and end at Soapstone UMC, although participants may travel to other locations.

Transportation to and from Soapstone UMC is the responsibility of parents.

**Exploitation** – Can include the illegal use or wasting of money, property or other assets of a protected person; human trafficking, and grooming<sup>6, 7</sup>.

**Neglect** – Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation.<sup>8</sup>

**Program Director** – A paid staff member responsible for a particular ministry of the church.

**Responsible Adult** – An adult who is responsible for the care of children and youth at a church sponsored event.

**Rover** – in the event there are not two adults in every classroom, one adult will be designated to rove from room to room during the event. The door should remain open as the rover moves in and out.

**Safe Sanctuary Coordinator** – A lay member of the congregation appointed by the Church Council to assist staff members with the administration and responsibilities of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures.

**Lead Pastor** – The Ordained Elder appointed by the Bishop to serve Soapstone United Methodist Church as the lead pastor.

**Sexual Abuse** – Child sexual abuse (CSA)— defined as “the involvement of a child (a person less than 18 years old) in a sexual activity that violates laws or societal taboos, and that the child (i) doesn’t fully comprehend, (ii) doesn’t consent to, or is unable to give informed consent to, or (iii) is not developmentally prepared for and cannot give consent to” — is a widespread public health issue and an adverse childhood experience (ACE). It can be verbal, as well as physical.<sup>9</sup>

**Staff Member** – A paid employee of the church, specifically including the Soapstone UMC Preschool. **Supervisor**-- Volunteers trained to work with children, youth and adults with special needs who maintain safe boundaries while delivering programs from the appropriate ministry.

**Unattended Child** – A child (birth to 5th grade) that is not in the direct line of sight at all times of the parent/ guardian or their designated attendee.

**Volunteer** – An Adult who has completed the volunteer application process, has been approved for service, and successfully completed Safe Sanctuary Training.

**Youth** – A child between the school grades of 6 through 12. 12th grade graduates may continue to be considered youth during the summer immediately following their graduation.

**Vulnerable Adult** – people eighteen years of age or older who are unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

**Youth Event** – A meeting, class or activity designed specifically for persons in grade 6 through 12.

## **Policies & Procedures**

### **Paid Staff Members**

All paid staff members (including clergy) are expected to submit to a background investigation, in-depth personal interview, and reference checks as required of volunteers as a condition of continued employment or employment. References should include all previous employers related to the ministry position. Paid staff members are also expected to update their information and undergo periodic training as required of volunteers. Current employees will not have to be “re-interviewed” or have their references “re-checked” as part of the implementation of this policy and procedure. The Staff Parish Relations Committee is expected to adopt the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures as part of the Personnel Policies for the church.

### **Volunteers**

#### **Application Process Required**

All volunteers for children’s ministry, youth ministry, and ministry with vulnerable adults must satisfactorily meet the requirements set forth in the Safe Sanctuary Policy and these procedures.

Volunteers must complete the volunteer application process. This includes

- Completing the first-time volunteer application form which includes references.
- Completing a criminal background check form and
- Participating in an in-depth personal interview conducted by the appropriate program director or their designee.
- Completing a Safe Safe Sanctuary training

The primary focus of the above process is to determine the applicant’s temperament and suitability to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. The secondary focus is to confirm the applicant’s stated experience in working in the past with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. The final focus is to determine if the applicant’s previous experience was successful in the manner in which he or she took direction, accepted training and guidance, fulfilled commitments, and maintained confidentiality. NOTE: Credit and Employment History is not part of this process unless directly related to working in these ministries.

Those wishing to volunteer to work with children or youth who have a personal history of being subject to child abuse or neglect while growing up are requested to meet with the Lead Pastor prior to submitting any application. An adult who is concerned about a prior incident is not precluded from volunteering. The adult should speak with the Lead Pastor prior to submitting the application.

Those wishing to volunteer to drive church-owned or church-leased vehicles on church-sponsored activities may be required to submit to a review of their driving history. Those driving personal vehicles may need to provide proof of liability insurance on their automobile.

NOTE: The fact that a person has an arrest or conviction for a crime or traffic offense does not in and of itself preclude a person from being a volunteer or a driver. The nature of any offense, when it occurred, and the age of the applicant at the time of the violation will be factors taken into consideration.

An outside firm will be contracted to perform the criminal background checks and driver history checks. The appropriate program director will conduct the personal interviews and check references. Only the Lead Pastor will receive copies of the criminal background checks. The Safe Sanctuary Coordinator will assist the program directors and Lead Pastor in reference checking and in weighing information that might question an applicant's suitability to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Background and License checks will occur every 3 years for all volunteers in children's and youth ministry. Any approved driver of Soapstone United Methodist Church that is ticketed for a motor vehicle violation needs to notify the church office immediately. (i.e. van drivers for youth ministry, mission teams, etc.)

### **Active Participation Required**

Every applicant who volunteers to work with children and youth must have a period of six months of active participation in the life of Soapstone UM Church prior to submitting to an interview and reference checking. Active participation means that the person has become more involved than just attending the Sunday morning worship services. Becoming a member of the church is not a requirement. This requirement is two-fold: we wish to have an opportunity for members of the church to get to know the applicant in a variety of settings in order that an opinion of their suitability to work with other's children can be formed, and we wish to deter any individual that might be attempting to volunteer only to form inappropriate relationships with young persons.

### **Age Separation**

A volunteer may not supervise youth or children unless there is a five year separation between the volunteer's age and the oldest child or youth they are supervising. In such a situation, the young adult volunteer must agree to guidance from a program director or senior volunteer. The program director or senior volunteer is considered the supervisor. The young adult volunteer's responsibility is to assist with leadership. Youth volunteers under 16 age will always have adult supervision. Youth over 16 should take safe sanctuary training and if working on church staff they will need a background check as well.

### **Training**

Volunteers must complete an initial training program and continuing education each year following. Initial training covers the specifics of the Safe Sanctuary Program while continuing education covers dealing with children, emergency policies and procedures, and the like. Youth volunteers over age 16 should take safe sanctuary training. Any youth (age 16 or older) working on the church staff will need a background check as well.

### **Volunteer Follow-up**

Volunteer applications must be updated every three years. Volunteers are encouraged to update their applications more frequently as necessary. This follow-up will include a new criminal background check and driver's history as appropriate. Part of the updating process is the voluntary disclosure of situations that may question the continued suitability of an individual to work with children and youth. Every year, volunteers will take an updated full Safe Sanctuary training. In year 2 there will be an online renewal training. In year 3 volunteers will participate in a policy review.

## **Supervision of Children and Youth**

No child below the sixth grade should ever be on church grounds or a church related event wherever it is held without immediate supervision from that child's parent, an older sibling (6th grade or older) or another responsible adult. Any youth between school grades 6th-12th can be without immediate supervision of a parent or adult when moving throughout the church site. These youth still require supervision and should not be on church property or church sponsored events without supervision. Youth volunteers under 16 age will always have adult supervision.

As a matter of practice and practicality, the younger a child, the more likely a parent is to stay at the church during a children's event. Parents remaining at the church for the purpose of supervising their own children are not considered volunteers for the purposes of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures even if they from time-to-time assist with children other than their own. They do fall under this Policy when they start to lead small groups, teach Sunday School, teach or assist in Vacation Bible School, lead a musical program and related types of activities.

The adults who volunteer to supervise youth are subject to these policies and procedures and must meet the application and training requirements and agree to abide by these policies. These positions specifically include any adult going on an overnight trip in any capacity with youth groups including UMYF, Musical Groups, Mission Trips, Confirmation Partners and the like.

The following rules apply to children and youth events:

- No adult should ever be alone with any child or youth. Even confidential counseling sessions should be in the view of another adult who is aware that counseling is going on.
- There should be at least two unrelated adults for every event. The number of adults present should reflect the number of children or youth participating in the event. There should be an adult to represent each gender of youth participating in events. Youth Sunday School may only have one gender represented due to roving supervision. For offsite or overnight children's events, there should be an adult to represent each gender of children participating in the event.
- Windows in doorways should not be covered during meetings, events, and small group sessions. Doors should never be locked.
- A roving supervisor is permitted to be considered the second adult in small group sessions including Sunday school classes.
- Spouses cannot be considered to be the second adult for each other. In the event that two adults supervising an event are a married couple, another adult supervisor or rover must be present.
- There must be at least one adult in every nursery school room on Sunday mornings. In addition to an adult rover, that adult may be assisted by a youth who is aged 14 or older.
- Children's ministry may use one adult and one trained youth (aged 14 or older) in a classroom, event, or activity. When evening nursery services are offered, the second person can be a paid nursery worker, which may be a youth aged 16 or older.
- Adults are expected to follow training guidelines on the appropriateness of various types of interaction between adults and youth and between adults and children.

## **Restroom Procedures**

The Church recognizes that use of the restroom is the most vulnerable situation and that this time is when children and adults with special needs are at most risk of potential abuse and adults who work with children are most at risk of being falsely accused of abuse.

During organized church events, parents are encouraged to ensure that preschool-aged children do not attend the restroom unaccompanied. Parents and guardians are also encouraged to have children use the restroom with parental supervision prior to the start of the activity.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to have elementary aged children remain in the sanctuary during the service, unless they accompany the child.

The following guideline from the Soapstone Pre-School is adopted by the remaining programs for children and adults with special needs and it applies to both volunteers and paid staff: "Staff should not be alone with any child. Never close a bathroom door with a child in the bathroom. The door can be blocked with a trashcan or another staff member can be located close by. If child is old enough to go to the bathroom alone, stand outside the door."

## **Unattended Children and Youth**

All paid staff members, volunteers, and other responsible adults have a responsibility to watch out for unattended children and adults with special needs. The child should be escorted to the Program Director or Parent if the child is wandering alone or with buddies and not participating in either the event or child care. Adult judgment is expected to determine if the unattended child has been "sent" by a parent to show responsibility by doing something alone. Those engaged in mischief should be approached right away.

Whenever possible, two adults should approach the child and escort them to the appropriate location.

## **Offsite events**

All children's ministry, youth ministry, and Happiness Ministry events held away from Soapstone UMC must have an event plan communicated to parents and family members of all participants. A hard copy of the event plan must be filed at the Church Office so that the information does not require computer access to retrieve. The appropriate event leader should give a copy of the plan to all parents prior to the event through a parent meeting or email notification. The following are minimum requirements for the plan: Adult-in-Charge, other adults on event, non-participating adult familiar with all event details, methods of transportation, destinations, itineraries, contact information for all adults on the trip, and list of participants.

In the event it is necessary to make an exception to the policy then parents and pastor should be informed and allowed to give consent.

Whenever transportation is provided by Soapstone UMC to an event or during an event, then the two adult rule should apply to all vans, buses, or cars. The adults in each vehicle should not be related. However, if a caravan is traveling from point A to point B and there is sufficient adult supervision for the entire event, but not necessarily enough for each vehicle to have two adults, one adult may be used per car. In the case of a caravan, all cars must make all the same stops.

For non-Soapstone sponsored events, including NC Conference UMC youth events such as Summer Breakaway or Global Vision, parents are encouraged to arrange carpools.

## **Overnight Events**

When traveling with children or youth, the following guidelines should be implemented when making sleeping arrangements.

During a hotel stay, adults will not share rooms with youth unrelated to them.

Adults and students will be split by gender for overnight accommodations. We will work to make accommodations for transgender individuals or gender non-conforming individuals.

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

## **Social Media**

Children and Youth pictures should not be posted on personal Social Media sites by Soapstone UMC volunteers or staff. Send children and youth group photos to church office for posting on church website, official church social media accounts, newsletter, etc. Photo permission must be verified by the appropriate director before any photo can be posted.

Adults will ask for parental permission to communicate with children or youth through email, cell phone, texting, and social media. Adults will keep records of all text/email/social media communication with children and youth by saving (not deleting) emails and texts, and saving or taking screenshots of social media communication.

Adult volunteers will not use the private message/direct message feature of social media platforms with youth or children unless a parent is included in the message thread. When a social media platform does not allow for others to be added to a private/direct message conversation, adults should keep records of all interactions by saving or taking a screenshot of the messages.

Adults will not initiate friend/follow requests to a youth or child's social media account; adults may accept a friend request from a child or youth, or follow them back.

Use BCC (blind carbon copy) option when sending broadcast emails so the email addresses are not viewable to others. Copy parents on any emails to children or youth.

Provide training for youth in using the privacy settings on social media sites and what to post and not post for safety reasons.

Appropriate director and councils will develop policies for cell phone use during ministry events.

Children and youth full names will never be posted on any website; given names will only be used with written parental permission.

Personal social media sites that identify adults as a Soapstone UMC volunteers should be consistent with the church's mission statement.

As new social media platforms become available, use of such platforms should adhere to policy guidelines. If the functionality of the platform does not conform to the policy, then a Safe Sanctuary Task Force (designated by Church Council) needs to meet and approve procedures before that platform is used.

### **LGBTQ Youth**

Being inclusive, yet protecting, of all children and youth is difficult to navigate. It is a process that is constantly changing and evolving. Currently, there are a few important considerations, which Soapstone United Methodist Church will seek to uphold:

- A) Make no assumptions about a young person's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- B) Stay educated on proper use of terminology.
- C) Be intentional about creating and maintaining a safe environment and culture of awareness around discriminatory language and bullying.

### **Emergencies**

The person in charge of a children's or youth event is authorized to take reasonable steps to promote the safety of all participants. To this end, the person in charge has the authority to immediately end the participation of anyone at the event. In the event that a child or youth has their participation ended, the person in charge must ensure the continued supervision of that child until the child can be turned over to his or her own parent or guardian.

### **Parent Responsibilities**

As parents entrust the care of their children to both volunteers and staff members for various types of activities Soapstone UMC offers, the parent should make sure that staff and appropriate volunteers have information necessary to properly protect and supervise their child in all situations likely to arise based upon the length of the activity and its location. This specifically includes notifying the appropriate program director of any medical, psychological, behavioral, child custody or similar issues. Parents should understand that not all activities are appropriate for all children. It is a parent's responsibility to make sure that an Adult-in-Charge is physically present for an event before leaving the church grounds.

Parents are also expected to communicate clearly to their children and youth that program directors and volunteers are acting with the authority of that parent while the child is in the care of any Soapstone UMC activity. Children and youth are expected to abide by any rules or conditions for any activity in order to participate.

Parents are requested to inquire of their children for feedback about Soapstone UMC activities. Constructive feedback is appreciated by all program directors. As part of the feedback, parents are expected to be alert for anything that suggests inappropriate behavior on the part of any adult toward any child at the event. The parent is requested to contact the Lead Pastor, the program director, or the safe sanctuary coordinator immediately with any concerns. (Safe Sanctuary Concern/IncidentReport form is on page 14)

### **Youth Responsibilities**

Those children who have reached sixth grade have individual responsibilities for the safety of themselves and all other participants. Youth are responsible for their behavior. Youth are also to be trained on what is inappropriate behavior between youth, and between youth and adults. Youth should contact the program director, Lead Pastor, or safe sanctuary coordinator immediately if he/she sees or feels that something inappropriate has occurred. (Safe Sanctuary Concern/IncidentReport form is on page 14)

### **Youth Participation in Adult Events**

From time-to-time, specifically skilled youth will want to participate in adult musical groups, study groups, and even official committees. If the youth's parent is not also participating in the adult event, the youth, the parent or parents, and appropriate program director should meet to discuss the nature of the adult events as it relates to the spirit of the Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures. Event specific guidelines may be established and reduced to writing and signed by the program director, youth, and parents. Any SUMC activity that is sponsored by Discipleship, Music, Worship, or other adult ministry, should have a safe sanctuary - trained adult if youth or children participate.

### **Vulnerable Adults**

A visitation ministry would include members who are homebound or in hospital or nursing care facilities. A pair of visitors should go on home visits. Visits to a nursing care facility or hospital should occur during normal visiting hours. The visitation team should go through proper security procedures at the facility. The room door should be left open. Visits to the home should include a call in advance and include notice to family members if possible. The members of the visitation care team should keep a log of times and persons visited. The ushers should be trained to assist adults with mobility issues.

In the Wonderfully Made Sunday school class and Happiness Ministry off-site events, the two adult leader rule applies.

### **Reports of Exploitation and Inappropriate Behavior**

All responsible adults and youth should be alert for exploitation or inappropriate behavior directed towards children and youth. Upon observing inappropriate, exploitative, or even questionable behavior, the observer is expected to complete the Safe Sanctuary Concern/Incident Report (included in this policy on page 14) and return it to the Program Director or Pastor overseeing the involved ministry (children, youth, adults, music, etc.) The incident report will be reviewed immediately by the Incident Review Team (composed of Lead Pastor, related Program Director, and Safe Sanctuary Chair). If the incident indicates any report of any type of abuse, the report will be submitted to the District Superintendent (D.S.) [ As per NCCUMC Bishop directive July 2025]

Inappropriate behavior can range from perceptions to a deliberate criminal act. Soapstone's responses can range from modifying individual or group behavior to calling civil or legal authorities.

For example, the game Twister can be considered innocent fun when played among persons of similar ages. If adults were to participate with youth in Twister, there may be a perception that it was inappropriate touching. The proper immediate response is to end the game and the proper follow-up is to point out to the adults that their participation might have been misinterpreted.

As behaviors leave the area of perception and move towards poor judgment on the part of the adult, the response from the church will become more formal. A case of poor judgment can be investigated internally, the offending adult counseled and monitored more closely in the future. If the behavior were to be repeated or other examples of poor judgment occur, the adult could be assigned to activities where they are more closely supervised by either the program director or a senior volunteer. The volunteer could also be required to step down from their role as a volunteer. During the review by the Incident Review Team, the individual will not serve in the volunteer or staff role.

At some point along this continuum of inappropriate behavior, the act of an adult towards a youth or child goes beyond perception, bad judgment, and becomes a criminal act. If there is any reason to believe that an adult has committed a criminal act towards a child, Soapstone UMC's response is to call the D.S. and to cooperate fully with the investigation. This includes acts committed by parents against their own children. Child abuse laws require notification to the proper agency and the UMC will respond. [NC General Statute 14-318.2]

## **Investigations**

If the incident report indicates any form of abuse or other criminal act, the pastor immediately reports the complaint to the District Superintendent (D.S.). The North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church (NCCUMC) Bishop & NCCUMC Director of Communications are notified by the D.S. The Lead Pastor will inform the Trustees if the incident results in legal action. The D.S. contacts the Sheriff's Department or Social Services. If the victim is a minor, the pastor notifies the parents. Once the report is made, the person is removed from his/her position (either volunteer or staff) during the investigation.

The NCCUMC Director of Communications becomes the spokesperson for the investigation. If the Lead Pastor is accused, the responsibility for reporting to the D.S. would fall to a designated lay person (SPRC chair). The D.S. contacts the SPRC chair. The SPRC chair speaks to the NCCUMC Director of Communications on behalf of the church. Confidentiality is important to protect the victim and the suspected abuser.

### **Cost Associated with Safe Sanctuary Procedures**

This is a risk management program. The costs of background checks and driver history checks will be paid from the Trustees budget. Volunteers are encouraged to help defray the cost of this program by a special donation marked "Safe Sanctuary." Paid staff members including Soapstone UMC Preschool will be charged back to their particular program budgets.

### **Review and Update of Safe Sanctuary Policy**

Each year before the Charge Conference, the Church Council will review the Safe Sanctuary Policy and certify to the North Carolina Annual Conference that our policy is up to date. When updates are found to be needed, or at the request of the pastors or staff of Soapstone UMC, the Church Council will appoint a Safe Sanctuary Task Force to review and edit the policy and submit changes for adoption by the Council.

Nothing in this policy should be interpreted to limit the authority of Church Council or the Lead Pastor to limit or prohibit the involvement of any volunteer in children's or youth ministry for any reason.



## Notes & Resources

<sup>1</sup> Love and belonging that genuinely includes all children, youth, and other vulnerable people with regards to gender identity and sexual orientation. *Findings suggest that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are 3.8 times more likely to experience child sexual abuse than straight youth.* (Prevent Child Abuse America)

<sup>2</sup> This definition is taken directly from *Safer Sanctuaries*, page 203. The authors note that many previous definitions have incorrectly included anyone with a mental, sensory, or physical disability in this category, and that it is ableist when we patronizingly assume that someone with a disability should be treated as less competent than other adults in our ministries. Adults with disabilities should not automatically be considered vulnerable in the legal sense.

<sup>3</sup> Love and belonging that genuinely and to the best of our ability includes all children, youth, and other vulnerable people with regards to levels of mental health challenges and cognitive ability differences.

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from the work of Brene Brown

<sup>5</sup> Adverse Childhood Experiences from preventchildabuse.org: <https://preventchildabuse.org/what-we-do/aces/>

<sup>6</sup>Grooming: The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART) uses the following definition of grooming: Grooming is a method used by offenders that involves building trust with a child and the adults around a child in an effort to gain access to and time alone with her/him. In extreme cases, offenders may use threats and physical force to sexually assault or abuse a child. More common, though, are subtle approaches designed to build relationships with families. The offender may assume a caring role, befriend the child or even exploit their position of trust and authority to groom the child and/or the child's family. These individuals intentionally build relationships with the adults around a child or seek out a child who is less supervised by adults in her/his life.

<sup>7</sup> Understanding Sexual Grooming in Child Abuse Cases from the American Bar Association: [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_interest/child\\_law/resources/child\\_law\\_practiceonline/child\\_law\\_practice/vol-34/november-2015/understanding-sexual-grooming-in-child-abuse-cases/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/child_law_practice/vol-34/november-2015/understanding-sexual-grooming-in-child-abuse-cases/)

<sup>8</sup> What is child abuse or neglect? From the US Department of Health and Human Services: <https://www.hhs.gov/answers/programs-for-families-and-children/what-is-child-abuse/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> Key Takeaways on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention from the preventchildabuse.org: <https://preventchildabuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/pca-csa2pager-111022.pdf>

**Safe Sanctuary Concern/Incident Report**  
**Soapstone United Methodist Church**

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Submission Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Program/Event Involved: \_\_\_\_\_ Event Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader(s) Involved (Paid or Unpaid): \_\_\_\_\_

General Concern/Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Submit completed form in an envelope marked as "High Priority – Personal and Confidential" to the director/ pastor of the ministry area involved. (This form goes to the **staff member** first, not the Lead Pastor, unless you are reporting that staff member)*

Soapstone UMC 12837  
Norwood Road  
Raleigh, NC 27613

**For Incident Review Team 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?:

**Soapstone Volunteer Application (page 1)**

**For first-time volunteers in Children’s Ministry, Youth Ministry, and/or Happiness Ministry (Updated November, 2023)**

Last Name	First Name	Middle Name	Gender M F	Age Range 18-22 / 23& up
Address		City	State	Zip

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Usual Occupation & Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Children(s) Name(s) & Age(s) (if applicable)

_____	_____
_____	_____

Emergency Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone \_\_\_\_\_

When did you start your relationship with Soapstone? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to Soapstone? Member      Attend Regularly      Other \_\_\_\_\_

If “Other”, please explain why you wish to volunteer at Soapstone, any special relationships you might have, and where you do attend church. Are you a member of that church?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Which Sunday service at Soapstone do you normally attend? 8:30      11:00

Please describe your current or previous work with children or youth, whether paid or volunteer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Continue to next page.*

**Soapstone Volunteer Application (page 2)**

Please provide two references who can speak to us concerning your previous work with children and/or youth.

Reference Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone \_\_\_\_\_

What is your favorite ministry opportunity for children, youth, or Happiness Ministry at Soapstone?

---

---

Why do you want to be a volunteer to work in this ministry?

---

---

How do you nurture your own spiritual growth?

---

---

How would you help children and youth nurture their spiritual growth?

---

---

Please list any special skills, hobbies, or interests that you have.

---

---

Have you read and do you understand the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures established by the Church Council of Soapstone UMC? Yes No

Do you agree to follow those policies, accept direction and supervision from paid staff, event coordinators and senior volunteers? Yes No

---

Signature

---

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

**Office use only:**

Interview date: \_\_\_\_\_ Conducted by: \_\_\_\_\_