

**Youth Abuse Prevention Policy**  
“Safe Sanctuary” for Carolina Cross Connection, Inc.

**Introduction:** Carolina Cross Connection (CCC) is an ecumenical “parachurch” organization, unaffiliated with any single denomination. CCC does, however, hold a covenant relationship with The Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, and agrees with the following statements of The General Conference and the policies and procedures that it recommends. The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, and the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, in June 2004, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of abuse of children and youth in the church. This would include sexual, emotional, physical, and ritual abuse, and neglect. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes a child...welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our futures, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

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 the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation, and abuse” (Paragraph 161 C).

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse (“ritual abuse” refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church, and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

*(From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church – 2000; pp. 180-81. Copyright © 2000, The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.)*

Thus, in covenant with the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, and in commitment to the church universal and to God Almighty, Carolina Cross Connection adopts this policy for the prevention of abuse of youth at our camp locations, worksites, and en route to and from our worksites. The purpose and intent for establishing this Youth Abuse Prevention Policy (including the Carolina Cross Connection Operating Procedures) is to demonstrate the absolute and unwavering commitment of CCC to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of youth participants.

**Statement of Covenant:** Therefore, as a Christian ministry of faith and service to God and others, we, Carolina Cross Connection pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our youth participants, as well as all of our adult participants, summer staff, administration, and people for whom we provide home repairs. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of staff; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our staff and administration 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. We will strongly encourage each church participating in the ministry of CCC to establish its own “Safe Sanctuary” policy and procedures. The Western North Carolina Conference Office of The United Methodist Church provides training in its districts to help local churches establish and implement a “Safe Sanctuary” policy and procedures.

**Conclusion:** In ministry to and with youth, Carolina Cross Connection is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each youth will be “...surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (From “Congregational Pledge 2,” “Baptismal Covenant II,” The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44).

**Endorsed by:**

Carolina Cross Connection Board of Directors

The WNCC Office of Youth Ministries and the Conference Council on Youth Ministries

*Adapted from Youth Abuse Prevention Policy, [Safe Sanctuaries for Youth: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries](#) by Joy Thornburg Melton, Discipleship Resources 2003.*