

Child and Youth Protection Policy

First Presbyterian Church of Concord, North Carolina

[Approved by Session, January 13, 2015,

with an effective date of June 1, 2015.]

I. Background Principles and Vision

As the First Presbyterian Church of Concord, North Carolina, we hereby express and affirm our commitment to maintaining a safe and nurturing environment for all of God's children, especially the most vulnerable among us. As the 205th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) observed,

“all children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that does not always value children... Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in his name; Jesus lifted up a child as an example of what the realm of God is like. Therefore, we hope for a church where we take seriously our baptismal vow to nurture all children committed to our care ...”¹

This Child and Youth Protection Policy proceeds from that same hope. We seek to be a congregation where all children and youth can be guided and instructed in the faith while also being protected from emotional, sexual, and physical abuse. Our specific goals in this policy are (1) to protect children and youth in all Church programs, (2) to educate our members concerning abuse issues, (3) to protect Church staff and volunteers (as well as the Church as a whole) from potential wrongful accusations of abuse or neglect, and, most importantly, (4) to answer the high calling we have all received to love one another as Christ loved us. This policy applies, under the direct authority of the Session, to all those who work with children and youth through Church programs both on and off Campus, including full-time staff, part-time staff, and volunteers.

II. Definitions

Whether capitalized or not, these terms as used in this Policy shall have the following meanings:

- “Adult” as used herein shall mean any person who is eighteen (18) years or older, and has either (a) been a high school graduate for at least one (1) year or (b) been approved by a teaching elder of the Church to serve in an adult capacity.
- “Campus” as used herein shall mean the property owned by the Church.
- “Child” (or “Children”) as used herein shall mean any person (or persons) of any age up to and including 5th grade.
- “Church” as used herein shall mean the First Presbyterian Church of Concord, North Carolina, Inc. and its trustees, directors, employees and members, together with the Preschool and its directors and employees.
- “Preschool” shall mean the First Kids Preschool and/or any affiliate or successor preschool or day care entity operating on the Campus.

¹ “Vision for Children and the Church,” approved by the 205th General Assembly of the PC(U.S.A.), 1993.

- “Policy” as used herein shall mean this Child and Youth Protection Policy.
- “Senior Minister” shall mean the Teaching Elder serving as the head of staff of the Church.
- “Teaching Elder” as used herein shall mean any staff member of the Church who is ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament.
- “Youth” as used herein shall mean any person or persons currently in 6th through 12th grade.

Child sexual abuse, as used herein, shall refer to any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the sexual abuse definition of a “child” is anyone under the age of 18.²

III. Policies and Procedures Relating to Supervision and Protection

A. Reporting.

1. As provided in G-4.0302 of the *Book of Order*, any member of the Church “engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.” Additionally, to the extent required by law, any staff person or volunteer of the Church (including, without limitation, the Preschool) who has cause to suspect that a child is being or has been physically abused or neglected during or in connection with an activity or ministry covered by this Policy shall report the case of that child to the director of the department of social services in the county where the child resides or is found.
2. In addition to the foregoing, adults working with children or youth should immediately report to the Senior Minister, an associate pastor, or to an active Session member (or to any other person(s) who may be designated by the Session) any behavior involving a child or youth which seems abusive or inappropriate; provided, however, if an allegation is made against any Teaching Elder on the staff of the Church, the report should be made to the Clerk of Session and/or to the Chairperson of the Administration and Personnel Committee. If substantiated, a report should be communicated to the Presbytery of Charlotte as and to the extent required by the Book of Order.
3. Upon receipt of an allegation of inappropriate behavior or sexual misconduct,

² Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) “Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures,” (October 2013). Accessible at <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/presbyterian-church-us-sexual-misconduct-policy-an/>

the Senior Minister or Chairperson of the Administration and Personnel Committee will obtain and document necessary and appropriate information, such as the name of the alleged victim, contact information, and the circumstances of the allegation. The Senior Minister or Chairperson of the Administration and Personnel Committee shall be entitled to seek such confidential advice and counsel as they deem necessary or appropriate with regard to the allegation and any additional reporting that may be required.

4. All allegations of inappropriate behavior or sexual misconduct should be taken seriously. Investigations will be handled by the appropriate professional personnel. In keeping with our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ, the Church's response to any allegation will be one of concern and compassion for all involved. The Church, including its staff and volunteers, shall cooperate with official investigating agencies.
 5. Persons who are objects of an allegation under this Policy shall be suspended from all activities until such time as the allegation is resolved. The Senior Minister or Chairperson of the Administration and Personnel Committee will have the responsibility of informing this person of the suspension. Subject to applicable legal and ecclesiastical requirements, any suspension or removal shall be handled with care and confidentiality.
 6. The Senior Minister and/or the Clerk of Session shall be the only persons authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Senior Minister or the Clerk of Session.
 7. All volunteers and staff of the Church will receive training in the areas of recognizing and reporting incidents of possible abuse.
 8. This document shall not be deemed or construed to circumvent or lessen any statutory obligation to report an allegation of abuse that would otherwise apply.
- B. Two-Adult Rule. Whenever and wherever reasonably possible, adults working with children or youth should not be alone with a child or youth without another adult present (the "Two-Adult Rule"). This rule shall apply to all activities of the Church that involve children or youth, including, but not limited to:
- Sunday School
 - Children's Church
 - Vacation Bible School
 - Preschool classes and activities
 - Child care provided for scheduled Church activities
 - Youth activities
 - Youth and children's choirs
 - Off-Campus events and activities where children or youth are present
1. With respect to rooms or classes used for Christian education, Preschool, choirs, nurseries or childcare, there should be at least two adults present in all rooms in which children or youth are present. If reasonably possible, the second adult present should be of the opposite sex.
 2. It is recognized that older children, within reason, may be given more flexibility and responsibility and may not always be under the direct supervision of an adult. However, staff and volunteers should (i) require older

- children and youth to stay in pairs or groups and (ii) minimize times when older children are alone. Subject to the terms of this Policy, adults should observe the Two-Adult Rule whenever an adult is present with any child(ren).
3. If it is not possible to maintain the two-adult rule in a particular room or space, reasonable steps should be taken (i) to maximize the visibility of the child or youth activity by other adults and (ii) to prevent the child or youth from having reason to feel “trapped” or unreasonably restricted in his or her movements.
 4. With respect to transportation for children and youth to and from Church sponsored activities, the following procedures shall apply:
 - (a) Ordinarily, transportation to church sponsored activities is provided only from the Campus to the activity and from the activity back to the Campus. Except in extraordinary or emergency circumstances, transportation from home to the church and return home is always the responsibility of the parents or guardians.
 - (b) As a general rule, the Two-Adult Rule shall apply to transportation of children and youth to and from Church activities. However, when compliance with the Two-Adult Rule is not reasonably possible, a “caravan” approach should be taken, with each driver striving to maintain close proximity and visual contact with the other cars *en route*. The caravan may break into smaller groups of cars if circumstances require it.
 - (c) For trips beyond the Concord area, drivers will carry permission slips for each child, signed by the parents or guardians. Permission slips include liability waivers for each activity. If permission has not been obtained for a child or youth, that child shall ordinarily not be permitted to ride.
- C. Background Screening. All employees of the Church (including, without limitation, the Preschool) and any volunteers who minister or provide care to children or youth in the Church (including, without limitation, the Preschool) must complete a background check through a screening service designated by the Session.
1. The screening service currently designated by the Session is the online “Volunteer Screener Plus” service offered by First Point in Greensboro (<https://www.volunteerscreener.com>). The Session reserves the right to change the screening service or the requirements relating to screening at any time.
 2. The initial, basic cost of a staff or volunteer screening for Church activities (including, without limitation, the operation of the Preschool) will be covered by the Church.
 3. While such situations should be avoided whenever reasonably possible, it is recognized that situations may arise in which last-minute “emergency” volunteer workers are required to fulfill a specific ministry with children or youth and that some of these workers may not have been previously screened. Any unscreened volunteers should be instructed to complete the screening process as quickly as possible.
 4. Evidence of screenings and any records relating to screenings or background checks will be maintained in a confidential manner. Access to such records is

restricted to (i) the Senior Minister and (ii) other persons authorized or deemed necessary by the Senior Minister.

- D. Special Provisions Relating to the Preschool. Notwithstanding the foregoing to the contrary, the following provisions shall apply specifically to the Preschool:
1. Because of the likelihood that some persons on the list of potential substitute teachers will never be called upon to serve as a substitute teacher in the Preschool, the Preschool shall only be required to complete background checks on those persons who are most likely to be called upon to serve as substitutes. Whenever possible, the Preschool shall select substitutes who have previously completed the background screening required by this Policy. Any unscreened persons who do serve as substitute teachers shall be required to complete the screening process as quickly as possible.
 2. The Church acknowledges that some Preschool staff are employed by parents or guardians of children enrolled in the Preschool to assist with transportation to and from school and/or to babysit children before and after school hours. Such arrangements and activities are expressly excluded from the scope of this Policy; provided, however, (i) the Preschool shall document such extra-curricular arrangements and activities directly with the parents or guardians of the child(ren) in a manner that leaves such child(ren) reasonably protected from harm and (ii) such documentation shall be in a form approved in advance by the Church.
 3. When transporting children between the drop-off/pickup area and the classroom, it is acknowledged that children may, from time to time, be accompanied by only one teacher. With regard to these “transfer times,” Preschool staff and volunteers shall take reasonable steps to (i) minimize times when the two-person rule is not being observed and (ii) use routes that are highly visible to other adults and staff.
- E. Special Provisions Relating to the Music Program. Notwithstanding the foregoing to the contrary, the Church acknowledges that some Church staff are employed by parents or guardians of children to teach music lessons on Church property. Such arrangements and activities are considered outside of the scope of such employee’s duties and are expressly excluded from the scope of this Policy.
- F. Corporal Punishment Prohibited. Under no circumstances may a staff member or volunteer worker of the Church (including, without limitation, the Preschool) correct a child using corporal punishment (e.g. spanking, shaking).
- G. Prior Charges and Convictions. Adults who have been convicted or charged with either child sexual abuse or physical abuse are not eligible for paid or volunteer ministry with children or youth.
- H. Six-Month Rule. It is recommended that adults volunteering to work with children and youth of the Church congregation must have attended the Church regularly for at least six (6) months before they begin such ministry, and that adults volunteering to work with children and youth of the Preschool must have had a student enrolled in the Preschool for at least six (6) months before they begin teaching or substituting at the Preschool; provided, however, this rule shall not apply to Preschool volunteers who will be working in the presence of two (2)

adults who have been trained and screened in accordance with this Policy.

IV. Policies and Procedures Relating to Photographs and Media

- A. Use of Photographs and Videos of Children and Youth. Photographs and videos of a child or youth may be used, published, posted and/or shared by the Church in its communications and media, including, without limitation, the Church website, newsletters, e-mails, press releases and social media postings (collectively, “Communications”), subject to the following limitations:
1. While identifying information may be used for Church directories and other Communications intended for internal Church use, no names or personal information (such as addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, etc.) of a child or youth will be used in captions of any photographs or videos in Communications intended for the general public (e.g., the Church website or social media postings). If the Senior Minister or a member of the Church staff determines that an exception to this policy is necessary or appropriate, written permission for such exception shall be obtained from the parent or guardian of the child or youth involved.
 2. If any parent or guardian does not want photographs of their children or youth included in Communications by the Church, such parent(s) or guardian(s) should notify the Church secretary of such request in writing.
 3. If any parent or guardian should object to the Church’s use of any photograph of his or her child or youth in a Communication, such parent(s) or guardian(s) should notify the Church secretary in writing. Upon receipt of such notice, the church will take reasonable steps to remove the applicable photograph(s) or video(s) from the website.
- B. Release of Liability. Neither the Church (including, without limitation, the Preschool) nor any of its officers, members, agents, employees, successors and assigns shall be held responsible for any claims or liabilities relating to the use of photographs, images and/or videos in any Communications.
- C. Use of Staff Photographs and Videos. Notwithstanding the foregoing to the contrary, names of staff members and their contact information may be linked to photographs of such staff members in all Communications.

V. Additional Provisions

- A. Periodic Review. All policies, procedures and guidelines with respect to “child abuse prevention” shall be reviewed as needed by the Christian Education Committee. Additionally, the Administration and Personnel Committee shall make necessary or appropriate recommendations to the Session regarding how the terms of this Policy operate with respect to Church staff (including, without limitation, the staff of the Preschool).
- B. Modification and Amendment. The Session reserves the right to terminate, modify or alter the policies in this Policy at any time.
- C. Publication and Sharing. This Policy shall be communicated to all Church staff (including, without limitation, the staff of the Preschool) and shared with the congregation as a whole. The Session is charged with this responsibility.