

SAFE HAVEN

Protection Policy for Children

First Presbyterian Church

Smithfield , NC

A Vision for Children and the Church

*Because we affirm that all children are a gift of God, created by God and created good;
all children are a gift to the whole of the human community;
all children have a real faith, and gifts for ministry;
all children have the right to be children;
and all children are not just tomorrow, they are today.*

*Because we believe that all children depend upon adults for safety and security
In a world that does not always value children;*

*All children are affected first and most by those things that work against health and wholeness;
where there is disease, children sicken and die;
where there is homelessness, children sleep on the streets and in other dangerous places; where there is war, children are frightened
and without a safe place;
where the air and water are polluted, children feel the effect in their bodies and in their futures;
where there is shame, children's spirits are wounded.*

*Therefore, we hope for a world where all children can find a safe place;
where all ages, races, genders, creeds, and abilities are recognized, valued and celebrated;
where all adults hear the voices of children and speak with as well as for them;
where all children have "first call" on the world's resources and first place in the minds and hearts of the world's adults.*

*Because 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;
where we bring good news to all those places where children are in need;
where adults and children alike share in ministry.*

*We covenant to act so that this vision may be made real for all children now and in
times to come.*

"A Vision for Children and The Church" was adopted by the 205th General Assembly (1993)

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

First Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe environment for the physical and emotional well-being of all children participating in FPC sponsored activities and programs, including any special programs. FPC will not tolerate abuse, neglect, and/or harassment of any kind in any church sponsored activities and any children's activities held on church property. For this reason, the following Safe Haven Protection Policy has been developed. This policy applies to individuals, including FPC employees and volunteers who are involved in children's activities and other groups using FPC facilities where youth or children are attending.

OVERSIGHT

The Christian Education Committee and Personnel Committee are responsible for oversight and supervision of activities involving youth and children.

DEFINITION OF "CHILDREN"

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" and or "children" includes all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years, including participants in youth programs.

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child 's basic needs such as food, water, shelter, and medical care or the failure to protect a child from harm.

Physical abuse is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child.

Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.

Sexual abuse is any sexual contact or interaction occurring between an adult and a child. This includes rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation; obscene or suggestive language or behavior, unwelcome touching or fondling. Misuse of technology which results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting or emailing suggestive messages and pornographic images to a person under the age of 18 is considered child abuse.

SELECTION AND SCREENING PROCESS

1. An Application to Work with Children must be completed and signed.
2. The Pastor, Youth Ministries Coordinator and/or Personnel Team chair will interview all applicants desiring to work with children to determine their suitability for the work they desire to do. The FPC policy concerning child protection will be discussed during the interview.
3. The applicant will submit a background check through a third party verification designated by FPC. The pastor, youth coordinator, and Personnel Team chair will have confidential access to this information for both employees and volunteers. Completion of the applicable employment application and consent form authorizes FPC to conduct these checks.
4. The church's designated agents will keep each application, background notes, and interviews, and results of any background or reference checks conducted by him/her, in a secure physical or virtual location. The results of any background or reference checks will be kept strictly confidential. Specific details of background or reference checks will be divulged only to the extent necessary to make a hiring decision.
5. Employees and volunteer workers must sign a statement that they have read and will abide by the FPC Safe Haven Protection Policy.
6. Potential employees who have a pending indictment alleging any offenses regarding children and/or violence, illegal substance use, or dishonesty will not be considered.
7. Each employee or volunteer covered by this policy is required to report any subsequent arrest, conviction, treatment or proceeding that would have been required to be disclosed on the initial application for employment to the Pastor/Head of Staff and/or Personnel Team chair as soon as possible. An employee's failure to disclose any subsequent development as required will be considered a violation of this policy.

The Session will approve all employees and volunteers who work with children.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Two Adult Rule. Every effort should be made to have two adults present in a classroom with children. If absolutely necessary, a teacher may work alone provided the door remains open or there is visual access in the door.

Six-Month Rule. No volunteer will be allowed to work with children in any capacity until they have been an active and participating member of First Presbyterian Church for a minimum of six months. The applicant must have been a regular attendee and involved in activities of the church for that period of time. A volunteer who has been active in the congregation for less than six months may be paired with someone who has been an active participant for longer than six months. The six-month rule may be waived for specific events with prior approval from the Pastor/Head of Staff, Youth Coordinator, and/or Personnel Team chair.

Observation of Children. Activities for children should be scheduled in areas where the door may be left open. Reasonable exception to this rule would be where seclusion is necessary for rest, provided two unrelated adults are present. At no time will an adult be alone in a room an area where they cannot be observed.

Transportation: A child's parent or guardian may give permission for an unaccompanied adult to drive a single child or children to a church-sponsored activity. Parental permission should be obtained in writing. In emergency situations, an adult leader may give a child a ride home. Reasonable attempts must be made to contact the parents prior to providing the ride.

Children's Pickup. No child under age 18 may leave the church property (supervised or alone) without the expressed permission of the parent to church staff or volunteers.

Overnight Activities. If both boys and girls are involved in overnight activities, they must be accompanied by both an adult male and an adult female advisor who are at least five years older than the oldest participant.

Release of Claims. Prior to any activity away from church property, a Release of Claims form will be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian. Without the form signed and in the possession of the church, the child will not be allowed to participate in the away activity.

Outside Groups. Groups not directly affiliated with First Presbyterian Church, i.e., scouts and other youth groups using FPC facilities must read and abide by this Policy. Leaders will be expected to read and sign the FPC Acknowledgement of Receipt of Safe Haven Protection Policy.

PROHIBITED CONDUCT

1. Corporal punishment in any form.
2. Verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse of children and youth
3. Leaving a child or youth unsupervised.
4. Children will not be disciplined by use of threat of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
6. Releasing a child to anyone other than the parent or guardian unless specifically authorized in writing by the parent or guardian.
7. Use of tobacco products, alcohol or illegal drugs on church property.
8. Carrying any type of weapon on church property except scout knives by scouts.
9. Profane language, inappropriate jokes or any other written/recorded material deemed inappropriate within the faith community.

Reporting Obligations. Any employee or volunteer of First Presbyterian Church who has cause to believe that a child's physical or emotional health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report that belief according to the following procedures:

The employee or volunteer will report suspected abuse or neglect to the Director of the Department of Social Services as required by NC G.S 7B301. The employee or volunteer shall also report it to the Pastor or the Youth Coordinator or the Personnel team chair. The Pastor will notify the parents of the child (unless the parent is responsible for the abuse). The Pastor/Head of Staff, Youth Coordinator, Chairperson of the Personnel Team, and the Clerk of Session will be notified along with legal counsel and the insurance company.

Reporting Obligation (NC G. S 7B-301)

(a) Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B101, 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 dependence; and any other information which the person making the report 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 assessment of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of maltreatment.

Incident Report. An incident report will be prepared by the person making the report as quickly as possible and given to the Pastor.

Confidentiality. All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation. In no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

Investigation of Alleged Abuse or Neglect. No person shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interrogation of the child, the accused person or a witness. It is acceptable to obtain a reasonable amount of information to have cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected. Interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the organization in an official capacity. All employees and volunteers shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.

Suspension of Duties. A person accused of child abuse or neglect will be placed on administrative leave (staff) or suspended (volunteer) from all duties involving children including child care, teaching and transportation until the investigation is completed. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the individual may resume their prior position.

Preservation of Records. Copies of all documents relating to an event of abuse or neglect, including a list of all persons known to be present or in the vicinity shall be transferred to the pastor who will maintain them until all criminal and civil investigations and actions have been completed.

Pastoral Care. The staff shall encourage and assist the child and the parents in securing appropriate counseling, care and support. In the event the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the organization, the staff shall encourage and assist the individual in securing appropriate religious care and support, including third-party counseling, being mindful of conflict of interest.

Application to Work with Children

This application is to be completed by all applicants for positions involving supervising or custody of children. It will assist FPC in providing a safe and secure environment for all preschoolers, children and youth.

Date: _____

Full Name: _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Business Phone _____

Driver's License # _____ State _____ Expiration Date _____

Date of Birth _____

Position applying for: _____

List Previous Experience Working with Children:

Date you are available _____ Days of week available _____

I have been a member of FPC since: _____

I am not a member of FPC. _____

Please list the names of three other religious organizations that you have attended regularly within the last 10 years,

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

List the names, addresses and phone numbers of three personal references

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

Because we care for our children and desire to protect them, we ask you to please answer the following questions. We understand they are personal and we will protect your privacy.

Have you ever been known by another name?

Yes ___ No _____. If yes, please explain _____

During your lifetime, have you ever been arrested for molesting or abusing a child, accused of physical assault or a sexual offense of any nature? Have you ever been investigated by a department of social services for abuse or neglect of a child.

Yes ___ No _____. If yes, please explain _____

Signature of Applicant Date

I certify that the information I have provided on this application for employment/volunteer work is true and correct. I authorize the church to verify the information I have provided on this application by contacting the references and employers I have listed, by conducting a criminal records check, or by other means, including contacting others whom I have not listed. I authorize the references and employers listed in this application to give you whatever information they may have regarding my character and fitness for the job for which I have applied. Furthermore, I waive any rights I may have to confidentiality.

In the event that my application is accepted, and I become a volunteer or employee of First Presbyterian Church, I agree to abide by and be bound by the policies and procedures of First Presbyterian Church and to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my duties on behalf of First Presbyterian Church.

I have read this waiver and the entire application, and I am fully aware of its contents. I sign this consent freely and under no duress or coercion.

Signature of Applicant Date

Witness Date

FOR OFFICE USE

Approved Background check submitted on (date and agency) _____

Signature of FPCS Authorization _____

**Acknowledgement Statement of
SAFE HAVEN Protection Policy**

I have read and understand the Safe Have Protection Policy for Children. I understand that my service as an employee of First Presbyterian Church or as a volunteer worker who works with children at First Presbyterian Church is dependent upon my strict adherence to these policies.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Incident Report Form

CONFIDENTIAL

Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident _____

Location of Incident: _____

Name of child or youth: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Name of Parent or Guardian: _____

Describe the incident: _____

Name of person(s) who witnessed the incident:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Other Relevant Information: _____

Signature of Reporting Individual Date

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Release of Claims Form

Name of Parent or Guardian (please print): _____

Address: _____

Child's Name: _____

Activity: _____

Date(s) of Activity: _____

I hereby affirm that my child shall be participating in the above named activity and certify that I am aware of the inherent dangers associated with participation in the activity and with the fact that participating in the activity may take place outside of, or off of, church premises.

I understand and agree that neither First Presbyterian Church, not its trustees, its employees, directors, representatives, or agents may be held liable in any way for any occurrence in connection with my child's participating in the activity which may result in injury, harm or other damages to me or my family.

As a part of the consideration for being allowed to enroll and participate in the activity, I hereby personally assume all risks in connection with my child's participation in the activity. I further release First Presbyterian Church, its trustees, instructors, agents, employees, directors, and representative or agents for any injury or damage which may befall my child while my child is enrolled in or participating in the activity. I further agree to save and hold harmless First Presbyterian Church, its trustees, instructors, agents, employees, directors, and representatives from any claim by me or my family, estate, heirs or assigns arising out of my child's enrollment and participation in the activity. I also authorize First Presbyterian Church to render or obtain such emergency medical care or treatment as may be necessary should any injury, harm or accident occur to my child while participating in the activity.

I further state that I am of lawful age and legally competent to sign this affirmation and release; that I understand the terms herein are contractual and not a mere recital; that I signed this document of my own free act and volition. I further state and acknowledge that I have fully informed myself of the contents of this affirmation and release by reading it before I have signed it.

I have executed this affirmation and release on the _____ day of _____.

Signature _____