

## **Safe Place Policy of Pickens Presbyterian Church**

Working Draft 10/11v.4

**General Statement of Purpose:** Abuse of anyone, and especially of children, is a destructive and shameful act that will not be tolerated at Pickens Presbyterian Church (the “Church”). The purpose of the Safe Place Policy (the “Policy”) set forth herein is first and foremost to protect the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of all children and youth while they are present at Church-sponsored activities. Scripture teaches us how much Christ loves children. In Matthew 19:13-14 we read: “Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said, ‘Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.’”

This policy is to protect both the children and youth in our church community as well as the volunteers and employees who work with them.

This policy seeks to be practical and reasonable, relying upon sound judgment and good sense while simultaneously ensuring that necessary safeguards are in place to protect our children and youth.

### **Definitions:**

**1. Abuse:**

Sexual abuse is that which consists of sexual contact or interactions with a child, including physical contact (fondling, genital/oral stimulation, sexual intercourse) and nonphysical contact (exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, and voyeurism). The perpetrator may be another juvenile.

**2. Child:** Any person under the age of twelve years old.

**3. Church Activity:** Any activity involving children that is sponsored by the Church. A Church Activity may be held on or off Church grounds.

**4. Youth:** A Child who is over the age of twelve or in the sixth grade through high school.

**5. Employee or Staff member:** Any person who is employed and/or compensated by the Church. Staff member does not include independent contractors. Nothing herein is intended to change the status of any employee or independent contractor as may be established by federal, state, local or common law.

**6. Volunteer:** Any person who spends at least five hours collectively in a calendar year participating in any ministry of the Church involving children or youth without pay.

**7. Work or Working with Children/Youth:** Having responsibility as a teacher, teacher's assistant or chaperone in a Church Activity.

**Scope:**

1. This policy includes all activities and programs held on our church property and field or mission trips.
2. This policy does not apply to the CDC (Child Development Center), since they have their own policy.

**Policies and Procedures:**

**1. Selection/screening /oversight of volunteers and employees**

a. Employees

- (1) All employees, prospective employees and independent contractors having direct contact with children shall fill out an application at hire. Any person who is found to have made a material misrepresentation on this application shall immediately, after such discovery, be prohibited from working with children.
- (2) All prospective employees shall provide at least two references. Either the Minister, DCE or the Chairman of the CO&A ( Church Office and Administration) committee shall contact these references.
- (3) All prospective employees shall be interviewed by the Minister and the Chairman of the CO&A committee.
- (4) With respect to prospective employees who have been interviewed and who are considered to be viable candidates for employment with the Church, and with respect to independent contractors having direct contact with children, the Church will perform or cause to be performed a criminal background check of the prospective employee. The Church may accomplish this task by hiring a third-party vendor that regularly performs such background checks.
- (5) No person who has been convicted of any of the following crimes shall be allowed to work with children: murder; rape; aggravated assault; felony drug charges; sexual abuse; sexual assault; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child; injury of a child; incest; indecency with a child; possession or promotion of child pornography;

sale, distribution or display of harmful material to a minor; employment harmful to children; or abandonment or endangerment of a child.

- (6) All current and prospective employees shall read this Policy and attend training.

b. **Volunteers**

- (1) All volunteers shall attend training.
- (2) No volunteer shall be allowed to work with children unless that volunteer has been a member of the Church or an active participant for at least six months. An exception to the six month requirement would be allowed for staff spouses who would be assisting the staff member in performance of their professional duties.
- (3) No person who has been convicted of any of the following crimes shall be allowed to work with children: murder; rape; aggravated assault; felony drug charges; sexual abuse; sexual assault; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child; injury of a child; incest; indecency with a child; possession or promotion of child pornography; sale, distribution or display of harmful material to a minor; employment harmful to children; or abandonment or endangerment of a child.
- (4) No person who has been terminated from employment because of allegations of child abuse shall be allowed to work with children.
- (5) All volunteers shall read this Policy and acknowledge understanding of it by signing the sign-in sheet at the volunteer training session.
- (6) PPC shall perform a search on the South Carolina Sex Offenders Registry annually to ensure all volunteers and employees are not included in the Registry.

**2. Supervision of volunteers and employees**

- a. It is the goal of the Church to have at least two adults to serve for children's activities.
- b. Recognizing that it is not always feasible to have at least two adults to serve in settings where children are involved, the following alternatives may be implemented when finding two adults for a Church Activity is not feasible:
  - (1) One adult and one Youth are present;
- c. The door to the room in which Children are present should remain open at all

times, however, a door need not remain open if the room contains one or more windows or other openings allowing adults from outside of the room to have direct lines of sight into the main portion of the room.

- d. During all Worship Services, Sunday School, Wonderful Wednesday and Vacation Bible School sessions, a member of Staff, a Session member, or a designee appointed by the Session, shall be on duty to monitor the progress of all Children's classes. Such monitoring shall be conducted by making periodic visits to the classes, although care should be given to cause as little disruption as possible.
- e. Support and promote spiritual and emotional growth and development in all interactions with the children and youth.
- f. Be alert to possible signs of abuse to children participating in church programs and immediately report any suspicions to the Minister or DCE.
- g. Adult leaders should avoid being alone in a vehicle with a child/youth. If a child needs transportation home after an event, contact the family and inform them of the situation prior to transporting the child. If the parent can't be reached, inform the DCE or another adult.

### **3. Overnight Trips**

- a. On overnight trips with children and youth, reasonable boundaries should be in place to respect the privacy of each person. Males and females should sleep in separate rooms. An adult may sleep in a room with two or more youth of the same sex. An adult should never share a bed with a youth or sleep alone in a room with only one youth. Under no circumstances can one adult take or accompany children or youth on an overnight outing. In addition, two adults who are married to each other should not be the only adult chaperones on any overnight trip.

### **4. Reporting**

- a. Procedures for reporting instances of alleged abuse to law enforcement officials shall be those set forth in South Carolina Code Ann Section 20-7-510, as may be amended. This Code Section states as follows:

Persons required or permitted to report; method; confidentiality.

[SC ST SEC 20-7-510]

(A) A physician, nurse, dentist, optometrist, medical examiner, or

coroner, or an employee of a county medical examiner's or coroner's office, or any other medical, emergency medical services, mental health, or allied health professional, member of the clergy including a Christian Science Practitioner or religious healer, school teacher, counselor, principal, assistant principal, social or public assistance worker, substance abuse treatment staff, or childcare worker in a childcare center or foster care facility, police or law enforcement officer, undertaker, funeral home director or employee of a funeral home, persons responsible for processing films, computer technician, or a judge must report in accordance with this section when in the person's professional capacity the person has received information which gives the person reason to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected as defined in Section 20-7-490.

(B) If a person required to report pursuant to subsection (A) has received information in the person's professional capacity which gives the person reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by acts or omissions that would be child abuse or neglect if committed by a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, but the reporter believes that the act or omission was committed by a person other than the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the reporter must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

(C) Except as provided in subsection (A), any person who has reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse and neglect may report in accordance with this section.

(D) Reports of child abuse or neglect may be made orally by telephone or otherwise to the county department of social services or to a law enforcement agency in the county where the child resides or is found.

Where reports are made pursuant to this section to a law enforcement agency, the law enforcement agency shall notify the county department of social services of the law enforcement's response to the report at the earliest possible time.

Where a county or contiguous counties have established multicounty child protective services, pursuant to Section 20-7-650, the county department of social services immediately shall transfer reports pursuant to this section to the service.

(E) The identity of the person making a report pursuant to this section must be kept confidential by the agency or department receiving the report and must not be disclosed except as provided for in this chapter.

b. Any person who is required, pursuant to South Carolina Code Ann Section 20-7-510, to report incidents of alleged abuse must also report such incidents to the Minister, or Director of Christian Education (DCE).

c. Any person who may, pursuant to South Carolina Code Ann Section 20-7-510, report incidents of alleged abuse may also report such incidents to the Minister, or DCE.

#### **5. Response to report of alleged abuse**

a. Upon any staff member becoming aware of any report of alleged abuse, said staff member shall notify the Minister, or the DCE, of such report as soon as is practicable.

b. Anyone accused of abuse will be immediately suspended from further responsibilities involving direct contact with children in any Church activity. Such suspension of the accused shall continue until an investigation of the report of alleged abuse has concluded, and it is found that such allegations have no merit.

c. Upon becoming aware of any report of alleged abuse, the Minister, or DCE, shall as soon as is practicable notify the Head of the Safety Committee, Session and the Chairman of the CE Ministry of the report of alleged abuse.

d. As soon as is practicable following the report to the Head of the Safety Committee and the Chairman of the CE Committee as required in subsection 4(c) above, the Minister, or DCE, along with the Head of the Safety Committee and/or the Chairman of the CE Committee, shall visit the parents or guardians of the child who is the alleged victim of abuse. Nothing herein shall be deemed to require any member of Staff or the Church to take any action that would materially interfere with an investigation of any law enforcement agency.

e. Subject to subsections 4(f) and 4(g) below, all reports of alleged abuse shall be treated confidentially and should be discussed with no one except those whom this Policy provides are to receive notice.

f. The Session, in consultation with the Minister, shall determine whether, when

and in what manner the Congregation shall be informed of an allegation of abuse.

g. The Session, in consultation with the Minister, shall determine whether, when and in what manner the Church shall inform its insurance carrier and/or legal counsel of an allegation of abuse.

**6. Other laws, policies and procedures**

a. Whenever it may appear that this Policy is in conflict with a federal, state or local law, such law shall be controlling.

b. Whenever it may appear that this Policy is in conflict with the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. said Book of Order shall be controlling.

c. Elders are mandatory reporters of any abuse. Report this abuse to the Minister and Head of the Safety Committee.