

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NASHVILLE TN
Statement on Child Protection and Prevention of Child Abuse



First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee (the “Church”) remains committed to providing and maintaining a safe, nurturing environment for all children and youth under the age of eighteen (18) while in its care during events which are sponsored or co-sponsored by the Church. Implicit in the involvement of persons in ministries to children and youth are the biblically based terms COVENANT and SHEPHERD. There is an implied covenant between the leader and the child and the child’s parents to be a good shepherd of that child, leading him or her towards an understanding of the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

A commitment to this call includes the adoption and enforcement of this policy on child protection and prevention of child abuse. This policy applies to all clergy, leaders, volunteers and other persons who work with children in any paid or voluntary capacity. **All children’s leaders and childcare providers who regularly interact with children or youth must read, be in agreement with, and sign this policy, and affirm that they have not resigned or been terminated from a position or leadership role for reasons related to misconduct.**

The Church believes that appropriate personal relationships between adult leaders and children and youth of the Church foster the community of Christ. Common expressions of affection (hugs), affirmation (pats on the back), support (prayer), or physical care taking (changing diapers, etc.) are appropriate in our community of caring Christians. Care will be taken, however, that adults do not behave in a sexually inappropriate way during Church- sponsored activities, such as demonstrating excessive physical expressions of affection or imposing such expressions upon another individual.

It is the goal of the Church that two adults be present with children at all Church-sponsored activities. The Church recognizes that there will be times when an unaccompanied adult may be present with a group of children or youth or with a single child or youth. In those circumstances, if an adult must be alone with children or youth for a brief given time (such as Sunday school or Bible class), he/she can only do so when subject to being visually observed at all times, such as through an open door or door with window. If children and youth need to be transported, it should be in groups. An unaccompanied adult will not transport an individual child as part of a Church-sponsored activity without specific permission of the child’s parent or guardian.

Prohibited conduct includes any form of physical, emotional, or mental abuse of a child, including but not limited to, the exploitation of a child which breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relationship. Sexual exploitation of a child includes, but is not limited to, any interaction between a child and an adult in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of an adult. This may or may not include touching.

Prohibited conduct may include, but not be limited to:

- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of sexual conduct towards a protected minor;
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a protected minor;
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between an older child and a younger child
- Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor;
- Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision;
- Causing mental or emotional injury to a minor;
- Possessing obscene or pornographic (sexually explicit) materials at any function of the Church;
- Possession or being under the influence of any illegal substances;
- Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a minor’s function of the Church;
- Any kind of verbal remarks with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendo directed to or about a minor;
- Carrying any type of weapon on Church property.

Tennessee state law provides that any individual who suspects an incident of child abuse or neglect shall report it by calling the Department of Children’s Services (DCS) at 877-237-0004. This report is MANDATORY and is not discretionary.

DCS recommends the following when reporting:

- Be specific with your reasons for suspicions of abuse or neglect. Include dates of incidents, details of any physical marks and/or behaviors and specific quotes of any indicators the child makes about abuse or neglect.
- If the child reports incidents of abuse or neglect to you, be sure to listen to the child and be compassionate. However, do not ask the child too many questions as they need to discuss the details of the abuse with trained professionals.

First Presbyterian Church additionally requires that:

- You first report suspicions of abuse or neglect to the Director of Children’s Ministries, the Associate Pastor for Youth and their Families, the Executive Pastor or the Senior Pastor.
- Immediately thereafter, you shall report the incident to DCS at 877-237-0004.
- A report to the Director of Children’s Ministry, the Associate Pastor for Youth and their Families, the Executive Pastor, or the Senior Pastor does not relieve you of your responsibility to report to DCS and does not justify a postponement of your report to DCS.
- The report to DCS must be made before an investigation is conducted into the validity of alleged misconduct.

All persons involved with the report or investigation shall keep the information in strictest confidence. The Head of Staff and Clerk of Session of the Church shall be informed of any complaints.

Upon accusation, the accused is entitled to prompt and fair disposition of such serious charges. It is acknowledged that Church members and pastors are subject to inquiry and discipline under the Book of Order. Physical, mental, or emotional misconduct shall be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal of any Church employee, leader or childcare provider.

I have read and agree to comply with these policies.

I also state that I have not been arrested or convicted of a crime involving sexual abuse or misconduct as defined in this Policy Statement, or resigned from or been terminated from any position for reasons relating to sexual, physical, or mental abuse or misconduct, as defined in this Policy Statement.

I hereby agree to authorize any background check the Church may choose to conduct and to sign any documents necessary to do so.

Signature

Date

Printed name