

**First United Presbyterian Church  
Child Protection Policy**

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## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### I. PURPOSE

From beginning to end, the Scriptures portray a God who protects the weak and vulnerable. God requires the community of faith to do the same. To that end, First United Presbyterian Church strives to honor and uphold God's mandates by adopting a Child Protection Policy. The purpose of this policy is to protect our children from those who would cause them harm. *"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"* (Matt. 19:14). Pursuant to this is ensuring the safety and well-being of any child participating in any First United Presbyterian Church activity, whether on-site or off-site. Those under eighteen years of age are the focus of this policy. It is unlikely that we can completely prevent child abuse in every situation, but it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk by following a thorough practical policy of prevention. This policy attempts to do just that for First United Presbyterian Church.

### A. Definitions

1. **Adult:** A person eighteen (18) years of age or older, who is in compliance with PA state law in regards to working with children.
2. **Child:** Any person under the age of eighteen (18).
3. **Staff Person:** Any person employed by First United Presbyterian Church who is responsible for children's activities. This person has regular and direct contact with children and must be twenty-one (21) years of age or older.
4. **Adult Volunteer:** Any person who supervises a children's activity, and is not employed by First United Presbyterian Church. This person has regular and direct contact with children and must be 18 years of age or older.
5. **Youth Volunteer:** Any youth from the age of 12-17 who assists in conducting children's activities under the supervision of a staff person and/or adult volunteer.
6. **We:** First United Presbyterian Church

### B. Those Covered By This Policy

All persons engaging in children ministries on behalf of First United Presbyterian Church are bound by this policy. First United Presbyterian Church is not responsible for other organizations that utilize the facility.

### **C. Assumptions**

In order to best ensure children's safety, we will use several assumptions. First a cadre of trusted and well-known adults is an excellent first line of defense against child abuse. Second, a common knowledge of First United Presbyterian Church's procedures to prevent child abuse will be a deterrent to those bent on evil where children are concerned. Third, physical or sexual child abuse is usually a one-on-one affair and doesn't occur in the presence of anyone else, including other children. Fourth, a careful system of checks and balances will reasonably ensure the safety and well-being of every child served by First United Presbyterian Church.

## **II. PROCEDURES**

### **A. Background Checks**

All adults (staff and volunteers) must have background checks in accordance with PA state law. Currently, this requires:

1. Every adult volunteer must undergo PA State Police Request for Criminal Background Check and PA Child Abuse History Clearance. Additionally, adult volunteers who have not lived in PA for at least 10 years must undergo FBI fingerprinting. Adult volunteers who have lived in PA for 10 years must "affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of an offense under PA law 6344."
2. Copies of the background checks must be provided to and kept on file by First United Presbyterian Church. The records will be handled and kept by the church secretary, Chair of the Discipleship Committee, and/or the Pastor of First United Presbyterian Church. The records will be secured in the church office, where only the persons previously listed will have access.
3. Background checks must be renewed as often as the law requires.

### **B. Three Person Rule**

Whenever there are children at the church and the church is operating in loco parentis (in place of the parent), a minimum of two adults are also to be present at the church. Additionally, there shall be no less than three persons together in a classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all children and youth activities.

Anytime there are children in the nursery, there will be a minimum of one adult volunteer and one youth volunteer present at all times to supervise the children.

### **C. Rooms Used**

Any contact taking place between children and those designated by First United Presbyterian Church to oversee them must occur in a public place or in a place where other persons can easily observe them. For example, interaction can occur in a room which has doors with windows, but not in a closet. Even in a room with windows, one adult should not be alone with a child. The exception to this is when a child desires to meet with a First United Presbyterian Church staff member or other adult privately. In such cases, the child must initiate the contact.

### **D. Off-Site**

This policy applies equally to activities involving First United Presbyterian Church children and youth which are endorsed or sponsored by First United Presbyterian Church, but conducted off-site from First United Presbyterian Church. In cases where First United Presbyterian Church youth are lodged off-site and common sleeping rooms and bathrooms are in use, every effort must be made to ensure that at least two adults are in the vicinity of the bathroom or sleeping area when youth are present. Congruent with the three person rule and when the church is operating in loco parentis, adult leaders shall not be in a vehicle with less than two youth for the purposes of travel, running errands or other reasons. Youth also are not permitted to go off alone in groups of less than three.

### **E. Compliance**

All adults working with children are to be made aware of First United Presbyterian Church's Child Protection Policy and annually must sign a form stating their understanding and compliance with this policy. This form is found in Appendix 2. The church secretary, Chair of the Discipleship Committee, or Pastor will ensure that every current volunteer has signed the form by September 30 of each year.

### **F. Permission Form**

All children and youth participating in First United Presbyterian Church activities—both on-site and off-site—must have a permission form signed by their parent or legal guardian. This form is found in Appendix 3. The signed form will be kept on file for all events in the program year (September through August).

### **III. TRAINING**

The Chair of the Personnel Committee or the Pastor of First United Presbyterian Church shall encourage training for all staff and volunteers in the prevention of child abuse using “Act 31—*On-Line Training, Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Mandated and Permissive Reporting in Pennsylvania*” as presented by the University of Pittsburgh. Either through participation at the church or on their own, staff are required to complete the training as often as PA law requires. Adult volunteers are strongly encouraged to complete the training.

### **IV. RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS**

A quick, compassionate and unified response to all alleged incidents of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in a children’s activity, the entire staff of First United Presbyterian Church shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies. If an allegation is made, the church shall follow the response plan as set out in its “Policy and Procedure of First United Presbyterian Church Regarding allegations of Sexual Misconduct.”

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **ABUSE DEFINED**

Mistreatment of any child in any form will be considered abuse for the purposes of this policy and is strictly prohibited. The First United Presbyterian Church staff, in consultation with Session, determines if a given behavior not expressly spelled out herein is prohibited under this policy. There are three main types of abuse: sexual, physical and emotional.

**SEXUAL**—Abuse of this type includes, but is not limited to: any sexual act perpetrated on a child or forcing the child to perform on an adult, fondling, genital contact, penetration of any orifice, forcing the child to expose him/herself or the adult exposes him/herself to the child, inappropriate observation of the child toileting or bathing, showing the child pornographic material, making any remarks intended to convey sexual overtones, making a child witness sexual activity, sexting in any form, any attempt to use visual images of the child for sexual purposes, any images of the adult shown to the child of a sexual nature, and trying to manipulate the child into receptivity to advances. Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by adults, adolescents and other children, provided there is at least a four year age difference between children.

**PHYSICAL**—This type of abuse involves: physical contact which results in fear of that adult by the child, injury of any type to the child, slapping, hitting, pinching or other means of inflicting physical pain, giving a child illicit drugs or alcohol, and neglect of the child in matters of toileting, eating, receiving medication or medical attention. Note that physical discipline of a child is expressly prohibited.

**EMOTIONAL**—This abuse is more nebulous, but can be just as damaging. Examples include, but are not limited to: denigrating comments made to a child about him/herself, excluding the child from activities without a good reason, teasing, taunting, encouraging others to ill-treat the child, withholding favors or treats without a good reason, repeated rudeness to that child and attempts to humiliate the child. It also includes any activity which produces prolonged anxiety, agitation, depression, impairment or inability to function at an age-appropriate level in a child.

**APPENDIX 2**

**AFFIRMATION OF UNDERSTANDING AND COMPLIANCE**

I hereby acknowledge that on (date) \_\_\_\_\_, I \_\_\_\_\_ received a copy of the First United Presbyterian Church Child Protection Policy. I have read it, understand it, and I promise to comply with the directives as set forth therein. In particular, I have read and understand the definitions of abuse as found in Appendix 1 and will not engage in any of those activities, nor others I know to be harmful to children. In front of God, my signature below attests to my solemn pledge that I will never harm any child under my care, either by work or by deed. Should I ever be found to have violated this trust, I shall furthermore accept any judgment made against me by First United Presbyterian Church after due process and shall abide by that judgment ever after.

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX 3**

**YOUTH ACTIVITY PARENTAL BLANKET PERMISSION FORM**

Parent/Guardian must read and complete this entire form. This is a blanket consent form and will be kept on file for all events in the program year (September through August). In the event of an emergency, this form will be essential for parental contact and appropriate care. In signing this form, you also give consent for your child to be transported by the youth director and/or those designated by the youth director for off-site events.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/Emergency Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**GENERAL RELEASE, HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT**

The undersigned or a member of the immediate family of the undersigned desires to participate in the youth activities at First United Presbyterian Church.

The undersigned or a member of the immediate family of the undersigned further understands and acknowledges that the undersigned or a member of the immediate family of the undersigned may incur personal injury or bodily damage while participating in the activities of First United Presbyterian Church.

The undersigned or a member of the immediate family of the undersigned further understand and acknowledge that First United Presbyterian Church would not allow the undersigned or a member of the immediate family of the undersigned to participate in such activity without releasing and holding harmless First United Presbyterian Church.

Further, the undersigned or a member of the immediate family of the undersigned request that First United Presbyterian Church allow them to participate in this activity and in consideration thereof agree to hereby release, and forever discharge First United Presbyterian Church leadership, staff, and any party volunteering on behalf of First United Presbyterian Church, all actions, claims, damages, cost, expenses or damages of any kind growing out of or related to any activity of First United Presbyterian Church in which the undersigned or a member of the immediate family of the undersigned participants. The undersigned or a member of the immediate family of the undersigned further understands and acknowledges that this is a full and complete release of the undersigned's or a member of the immediate family of the undersigned's participation in First United Presbyterian Church youth activities.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Parent/Legal Guardian)

