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### To the Christ Presbyterian Church family:

We are thankful to our Lord that He has established a culture of protecting the children in our church. We are thankful for all of the children's ministry workers in Sunday School and in the nursery who Christ has used to shepherd and protect His Covenant children.

We as a church are committed to providing a safe place where children may hear and accept the Gospel that will save them. God's Word warns us that because of sin, we live in a fallen world (Psalm 14:2–3) where people abuse other people for their own selfish purposes. Such misconduct is contrary to our Savior's Gospel that says all men, women and children are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27), that calls upon us to sacrificially love our fellow image bearers (Luke 10:25–37), and calls upon us to count them more significant than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Our Lord is opposed to all conduct that abuses others, and he calls upon Christians to protect the vulnerable (Exodus 22:21–24), which includes our children.

Upon the recommendation of our children's ministry staff, the Session has approved this update to our child protection policy. The session asks that everyone in the church do the following:

- **Read** this policy carefully.
- **Abide** by it in your ministry work with children.
- **Ask** me any questions and please share any concerns or suggestions.
- **Remember** that no policy or procedure can substitute for each of us exercising wisdom, paying attention, and encouraging each other to follow the policy so that we may protect our infants, children, youth, families, and congregation.

We are committed to fostering a culture that protects our children, remembering that it is our Lord who is our shield (Genesis 15:1). He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power at work within us (Ephesians 3:20–21).

In Christ,

*Porter Harlow*

Pastor



## **Child Protection Policy**

### **STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The Session of Christ Presbyterian Church (CPC), Burke, Virginia, recognizes that our children and youth are entrusted to the care of adults who lead church programs and activities both on and off property used by CPC and also in educational or recreational programs operated by others.

The Session and the church are committed to maintaining an environment in which children and youth are protected from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; and in which church staff, teacher, and volunteer workers are protected from potential false allegations of abuse.

To achieve the goals of preventing either incidents of abuse or the unfounded assertion of such conduct, CPC has developed appropriate procedures to be followed in the following areas:

- ◆ The screening and selection of workers involved in the supervision or custody of minors;
- ◆ Orientation and training of approved workers;
- ◆ Supervision of these workers by trained leadership;
- ◆ Reporting of and responding to any incident and/or allegation of the abuse of a minor.

This policy is intended to protect children and youth from abuse in church sponsored events. The general policy and procedures shall apply to all persons, whether compensated staff, teacher or volunteer workers, all church members, visitors, and guests. This policy does not constitute a contract between the church and its workers. As situations arise in the future which are not adequately covered by a specific procedure or policy, this policy may be revised by the Session.

## DEFINITIONS

**CPC:** Christ Presbyterian Church, Burke, Virginia

**CHILDREN, YOUTH AND/OR MINORS:** Any person under 18 years of age involved in programs provided at or sponsored by CPC.

**REGULAR TEACHERS AND WORKERS:** Any paid or volunteer worker who serves in a CPC ministry to children on an ongoing basis. They agree to submit to the leadership and government of the church in their service.

**CHILD ABUSE:** Any wrongful treatment of a child which results in any non-accidental injury to the child, including physical, emotional, and/or sexual injury. Evidence of injury may include scars, bruises, wounds, medical findings, etc.

**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:** Any teacher, worker or other person or caretaker who has or is involved with the care of a child who commits, permits or encourages the commission of any sexual act, touching, or contact, vaginal intercourse, other sexual gratification, the obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child in such, or any other offense against public morality and decency, by, with, or upon a child, or who commits, permits or encourages any act or prostitution with or by a child.

**CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STAFF (CPC Staff):** The staff of the children's ministry includes the following persons: Pastor, the Children's Sunday School Coordinator, the Nursery Coordinator(s).

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. CPC is subject to the laws and regulations of the Commonwealth of Virginia
2. CPC will seek to prevent the abuse of children when they are participating in church programs. Preventive measures shall include screening, training and supervision of teachers of children and workers with children as defined in this policy.
3. It shall be the responsibility of the CPC staff member accountable for any CPC program that involves minors to ensure that appropriate practices are implemented within those programs and activities to reduce the risk of abuse. The specific circumstances of each program shall be considered in the development of those program-specific practices.
4. CPC staff will provide annual re-training in the CPP during the month of August before the Sunday School semester starts.

## **TRAINING**

1. All regular teachers and workers will be given a written copy of this policy. They will be asked to read this policy when applying to serve with the children's ministry.
2. Information and instruction concerning this policy and related abuse issues involving children shall be offered periodically, and at least annually, at CPC. The following goals will be addressed:
  - ◆ Protection of children in CPC programs and activities;
  - ◆ Protection of providers from exposure to "high risk" situations and false accusations;
  - ◆ Awareness of the signs and symptoms of abuse;
  - ◆ Understanding of the reporting procedures and the procedures for responding to incidents/reasonably suspected incidents of abuse.
3. This information and instruction are required training for each new regular teacher and worker involved in the custody of children.

## **SCREENING**

1. All regular teachers, workers and other persons involved in the custody and care of children at CPC must have been a regular attender of the church for at least six (6) months. Exceptions to this provision will be made for those who are members in good standing of an evangelical church and provide a reference from the leadership (to include a leader in the children's ministry) of their previous church.
2. All new regular teachers and workers involved in the custody and care of children at CPC shall complete a confidential Application that will ask for references and include questions concerning child abuse. The application will be submitted to the CPC staff person responsible for the ministry.
3. Criminal background checks and/or reference checks on regular teachers and workers will be made by or under the direction of the CPC staff member directly responsible for the ministry in question.

4. Application files for all regular teachers and workers shall be maintained by CPC and shall include the Application and the results of any investigations or inquiries made pursuant to an applicant's responses on these forms.
5. The personnel files of all CPC staff working with children shall include the Application and the results of any investigations or inquiries made pursuant to an applicant's responses on these forms.
6. Confidentiality of the completed and signed forms utilized to implement this policy shall be maintained by limiting the access to these filed forms to the Pastor, the CPC staff member directly responsible for the ministry specific to the application and the Session or its designees. (Access to confidential forms by members of the Session or designees of the Session will be allowed strictly on a "need to know" basis.)
7. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of the family of CPC. Individuals who have such a history should discuss their desire to work with children with a member of the CPC pastoral staff prior to applying for or engaging in any volunteer service involving children.
8. The Applications and information gained as a result of any reference check, background check or other related investigation of persons whose offer to serve is withdrawn or declined before service will be destroyed.
9. Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse are not permitted to provide supervisory services in any church-sponsored activity or program for children.
10. Occasional or one-time teachers and workers who have not been screened will serve only in the presence of and under the supervision of a regular teacher or worker who has been screened and approved.
11. All regular teachers and workers will need to complete the application and screening process in order to serve children at CPC. They will also be required to go through an annual renewal process that will take place in August of each year under the direction of the CPC staff member directly responsible for the ministry specific to the application.

## **SUPERVISION**

1. Teachers, workers and other persons involved in the custody and care of children at CPC should observe the "two adult rule," which requires an adult working with children to be accompanied by another worker. The "two adult rule" should be followed whenever possible. The "two adult rule" must be adhered to strictly in areas considered to be high isolation settings. The "two adult rule" may include and allow for scenarios in which an adult regular teacher or worker is assisted by a youth worker who is older than the children being supervised, subject to approval by the CPC staff member directly responsible for the ministry.
2. One-on-one supervision of a minor or any other exception to the "two adult rule" is acceptable ONLY in the event it occurs in a public area that is not considered to be a high isolation setting OR if parental permission is received in advance.

3. All rooms used by adults and minors together should be accessible (unlocked doors) and have open visibility (a window in the door or the door left wide open).
4. CPC staff members or their designees may make unannounced visits to all scheduled classes or small group situations involving children, youth, teachers and workers.
5. Parents or legal guardians are welcome to observe any activity involving their child.
6. CPC teachers and workers will not search children.
7. Physical force will not be used except in self-defense or when deemed necessary to prevent possible injury. Teachers and workers will work in teams in all significant discipline problems. Teachers and workers will notify parents any instances of force or restraint.
8. All teachers or workers for any overnight church activity involving minors must be approved in advance by the CPC pastoral or program staff responsible for that program.
9. The parent or guardian is responsible for ensuring that the child is not left alone in an unsupervised area. Pick up of children up to and including kindergarten shall only be by the parent or guardian unless written, signed notification is provided for other arrangements.

## **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING INCIDENTS OF ABUSE**

### **Incidents Involving Minors:**

1. Incident of abuse that occur or are reasonably believed to have occurred at a CPC event, and where a child's physical or mental health has been or may be adversely affected, shall be reported as soon as possible to the Fairfax County's Child Protective Services (CPS) at 703-324-7400<sup>1</sup> or to a local law enforcement agency. Any such incident must also be reported to the CPC staff person directly responsible or the Pastor. The staff person and/or Pastor shall make a report or verify that a report has been made to appropriate authorities. Mandatory Reporters can use this weblink to file reports: <https://vacps.dss.virginia.gov/VACPSWeb/faces/landingPage.xhtml>
2. Reports to local authorities can be made orally, by telephone, or otherwise. Reports from persons requesting to remain anonymous shall be made by telephone in the presence of a witness of the reporter's own choosing to verify the filing of the oral report. Such a witness may include the CPC staff person directly responsible for the area of ministry involved or the Pastor
3. The identity of any person making such a report will, pursuant to Virginia law, be kept confidential by the agency or department receiving the report, except as provided by law. Such exceptions would include the CPS providing such information to the law enforcement agency investigating the report.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/children-youth/report-child-abuse>

4. CPC will follow and comply with Virginia law concerning reporting of abuse. A copy of Virginia Child Protective Services regulations is attached to this policy and are incorporated by reference as a part of this policy.

## **PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO QUESTIONABLE CONDUCT**

### **Incidents Involving Minors:**

1. All members of CPC, staff and other adults participating in CPC programs are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for abuse of children and youth. All are encouraged not to hesitate to caution others that activities they observe are, or may appear to be, questionable.
2. *Questionable* behavior when observed shall be reported to the CPC staff person directly responsible for the specific area of ministry involved, as such conduct can *precede* abuse, even though the observed act itself is not.

## **PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO ABUSE ALLEGATIONS**

### **Incidents Involving Minors:**

1. Facts and circumstances of an incident shall be documented. Concurrently with the notification to the CPS (refer to "Reporting Procedures"), the CPC staff person directly responsible for the area of ministry involved or the Pastor shall be notified of the incident of abuse. In the event the person making the report wishes to remain anonymous or otherwise prefers not to document the report, the CPC staff person or Pastor notified of the incident shall document the report.
2. The Pastor or designee shall be responsible for securing the safety of the potential victim in cases where CPS is not responsible for the potential victim, for immediate notification of parents/guardian of the potential victim, and for notification of the person accused of the abuse. The safety of the potential victim must be safeguarded *before* contacting the person(s) accused of abuse.
3. In the event any in-depth investigation becomes necessary, it shall be carried out by CPS and/or appropriate law enforcement personnel and not by church personnel.
4. Persons accused shall be immediately relieved of further responsibilities involving direct contact with minors until any investigation is completed and the allegations are cleared *or* charges are formally brought against the accused. If charges are made, the Session shall consult with the accused regarding future responsibilities.

5. The Pastor or his designee shall report incidents of abuse to legal counsel for the church, the liability insurer for the church and the Session or the committee of the Session designated to receive and address any such reports.
6. The Pastor or his designee shall document all steps taken in the course of handling the incident or report. The documentation shall be kept in a confidential file maintained by CPC.
7. All parties involved in the incident or reasonably suspected incident, including the accuser, the accused, and the victim, shall be treated with dignity, support, and love. Confidentiality of all persons involved shall be safeguarded to the fullest extent possible.
8. The Pastor shall be the sole spokesperson for the church insofar as media inquiries are concerned. However, where appropriate the Pastor and Session may designate another individual to act in such a capacity with regard to a given case. The Confidentiality of all persons involved shall be safeguarded to the fullest extent possible.