

# **Child and Youth Safety Policy First Presbyterian Church Kalamazoo**

May, 2011

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **PURPOSE:**

First Presbyterian Church Kalamazoo is a spiritual community that takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and youth who participate in our ministries. This policy statement covers the obligations of church employees and volunteers who work with children and/or youth. All employees and volunteers of First Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo must comply with Parts 1 and 2 of the "Child and Youth Safety Policy," and complete the appropriate application form(s) in Part 3.

All are encouraged to participate fully in the lives and ministry of children and youth. However, the church has an overriding obligation to safeguard all children and youth under its care from abuse and neglect. The following, (1)"Requirements of Employees and Volunteers in the Children and Youth Ministries," (2)"Child and Youth Safety Guidelines and Procedures," and (3)"Child and Youth Paid & Volunteer Application Form(s)," reflect the commitment of First Presbyterian Church to provide a safe environment for all children, youth, employees, and volunteers who participate in any church-sponsored activity or ministry. These three (3) parts plus the Introduction constitute the Child and Youth Safety Policy.

### **DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERS:**

For the purpose of this policy, "volunteers" are defined as those people who of their own free will offer to help lead or provide child care for the children and youth who come under the care of First Presbyterian Church. The term "volunteers" shall include but not be limited to all teachers, drivers, chaperones, childcare providers, choir leaders, shepherds, hall monitors, youth sponsors, youth leaders and confirmation mentors who work with children and youth.

Those persons who are not regular paid employees of the church but are monetarily reimbursed for their occasional service shall be called independent contractors. For the purpose of this policy, all independent contractors shall be considered "volunteers."

All volunteers who are in leadership roles in these ministries are living out the vows taken when children are baptized to nurture our children and youth in the Christian faith. Every volunteer plays a key role in fostering spiritual development of children, youth and families in our church community.

### **REQUIREMENTS**

In order to provide a safe community for children, youth, and adults, the church requires all employees and volunteers to comply with the "Requirements of Employees and Volunteers in the Child and Youth Ministries" and the "Child and Youth Safety Guidelines and Procedures" adopted by the Session of this church.

In doing so all employees and volunteers will be asked to:

- Complete the “Children and Youth Paid & Volunteer Application” or “Child and Youth Addendum to Employee Application” and “Background Inquiry Release Form, Presbytery of Lake Michigan” (see Part 3).
- Review the attached "Guidelines and Procedures" at an orientation session and meet with the appropriate staff person.
- Complete a training course regarding the safety and protection of children.
- Remain under the supervision of the respective professional staff persons.

Any person who is currently under investigation for, or has been convicted of (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, or (3) physical abuse, shall not be permitted to work or volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program involving children or youth.

## **REVIEW**

The Christian Education Committee shall review the Child and Youth Safety Policy and its implementation each September and report to Session.

## **PART 1**

### **REQUIREMENTS OF EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS IN THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES**

1. All employees and children and youth volunteers must read the "Child and Youth Safety Policy" of this church; agree to it by completing and signing the appropriate application form(s) (including the “Background Inquiry Release Form, Presbytery of Lake Michigan), attend an orientation session and meeting with the appropriate staff person to review the "Guidelines and Procedures," and complete a training module.
2. All volunteers must be members of First Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo for a period of no less than 6 months unless otherwise approved by the Session.
3. Employees and volunteers are required to report immediately to their supervisors any suspicious or inappropriate behavior of suspected (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, or (3) physical abuse.
4. The Christian Education Director shall be responsible for maintaining a roster of individuals approved to provide child supervision. The list shall contain: individual names, date approved, and contact information. The Christian Education Director shall be responsible for making the roster accessible to other staff and volunteers. The Christian Education Director in collaboration with Christian Education Committee shall report to Session annually (each program year) that the list of approved volunteers has been audited for compliance with this policy.

## PART 2

### CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

#### On-site procedures

- 1) At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The only exceptions to this policy would be in situations in which a) the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth; or b) parents have provided prior written permission, or c) an unforeseen emergency occurs and all attempts to comply with the policy have failed (in this case, the remaining adult will provide a report of the situation to the Christian Education Director).
- 2) The maximum ratio of children to adults shall be:
  - a) Nursery (2 and under) – 3:1
  - b) Preschool (3-4) – 4:1
  - c) Elementary (5-11) – 8:1
  - d) Middle School – 8:1
  - e) High School – 10:1

In addition, related individuals may not constitute the total number of required Adults present.

- 3) Each floor containing classrooms shall have a Hall Monitor present during Church School hours.
- 4) All rooms and classrooms shall have their doors closed and locked when not in use.
- 5) Restroom use: Pre-school age children shall be accompanied to the restroom by their teacher (note: there must be sufficient remaining adults in the classroom to abide by the “no one adult left alone with children” rule) who will wait at the door for the child (note: there must be sufficient remaining adults in the classroom to abide by the “no one adult left alone with children rule”). The Hall Monitor shall be informed of their destination on the way to and from the restroom. (If a pre-school age child needs assistance in the restroom, the teacher shall provide the assistance necessary, first encouraging the child to handle as much of the process as he/she can. Bathroom and stall doors must remain open) Elementary school age children may choose a same sex "buddy" to accompany him/her to the bathroom. The Hall Monitor shall be informed of their destination on the way to and from the restroom.
- 6) Check in/Check out Policy and Releasing of minors: Depending on the age of children and youth, some may require check in or check out by parents. It is the responsibility of the volunteers, teachers, and any other youth leader to abide by the following procedures for receiving and releasing youth at the end of the designated time.
  - a) Nursery (for further clarification see Jesus And Me Nursery Policy)
    - i) Upon check in all parents will complete a child safety label for each child. These labels will indicate 1) child's name 2) parent's name, 3) parents location during child's nursery stay, 4) special needs of the child, and 5) the pager number issued to the parent.
    - ii) Upon check out the parent must present the child safety stub upon picking up his or her child at the end of services. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the child

safety label the Pastor Head of Staff or Nursery Ministry Coordinator will be contacted. He/She will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of the parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

b) Preschool

- i) Preschool teachers will escort all students up to classrooms after “Moment with young worshipers” unless special circumstances require parents to bring them to the classroom.
- ii) Preschoolers may only be released to parents, legal guardians, or any other adult that has written permission on file with the preschool teachers.
- iii) In the event that a child is brought to preschool without proper papers completed outlining who has authority to pick up the child, the preschool teacher(s) will:
  - (1) Ask the child who brought him or her to church that day
  - (2) Ask the child to identify the individual asking to have the child released
  - (3) Complete the proper paperwork with the parent or legal guardian

c) Elementary

- i) Elementary teachers or Shepherds will escort all students up to classrooms after “Moment with young worshipers” unless special circumstances require parents to bring them to the classroom.
- ii) Elementary students may only be released to parents, legal guardians, or any other adult that has written permission on file with the elementary teachers.
- iii) In the event that a child is brought to church school without proper papers completed outlining who has authority to pick up the child, the elementary teacher(s) will:
  - (1) Ask the child who brought him or her to church that day
  - (2) Ask the child to identify the individual requesting release of the child
  - (3) Complete the proper paperwork with the parent or legal guardian

d) Middle School

Release of students will be coordinated between parents and youth leaders.

e) High School

Release of students will be coordinated between parents and youth leaders.

If a situation unexpectedly does not meet the criteria of any of these policies then alternatives must be put into place so that the event is in compliance. The following examples are meant as illustrations only and are not to be perceived as the only possible situations or solutions.

- i) Example: If only one teacher and one child/youth shows up for a Sunday school class then the supervisor could recommend these solutions:
  - (1) The teacher and child/youth could join another class for the morning
  - (2) The supervisor could join the teacher and child/youth
  - (3) The teacher and child/youth could attend church
- ii) Example: The mentor/confirmand partners must find ways to meet the criteria of the policy.
  - (1) The confirmand could meet the mentor in a public place such as a coffee shop
  - (2) The confirmand/mentor pair could meet with another confirmand/mentor pair
- iii) Example: For a mid-week Bible Study there are a few toddlers who need child care, and a scheduled attendant is unexpectedly unavailable.
  - (1) The parent(s) can give written permission to provide care by only one approved individual (out of ratio).

## **Off-site procedures**

- 1) At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth or with prior written permission of a parent or legal guardian.
- 2) As each facility will be different, it will be the responsibility of the supervisors to determine how best to use the facility and comply with the church policy.
- 3) Overnights: Males and females shall be segregated during sleeping time. If it is deemed necessary for adults to share sleeping accommodations with the children/youth, a minimum of two adults, the same sex as the children/youth to be chaperoned, shall sleep in each area.
- 4) All drivers and chaperones on children/youth off-site trips shall be included in all parts of the Child and Youth Safety Policy. In addition they shall complete the Volunteer Driver Information Form.
- 5) When non church members are present and representing First Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo, those volunteers must comply with the Child and Youth Safety Policy.

## **Outside Groups using the church facility**

Any person or group who uses the First Presbyterian facility for non-church sponsored activities with children or youth shall be required to comply with this Child & Youth Safety Policy. At the time a contract is made or permission is granted to use the facility, it shall be the duty of the Office Administrator to obtain written confirmation from the users of their need for compliance.

## **Use of Photos of Minors**

### Small Groups

The use of photos of small groups of minors (groups of 9 or less minors) may only be used:

- 1) With the prior written consent of a parent or guardian. (Consent given on "Website & Publications Photo Release Form")
- 2) If no names, identifying or contact information is used.

In the event that a parent or legal guardian objects to a photo, for any reason, it will be removed as quickly as possible without questions asked.

### Large Groups

Photos of large groups that include minors (a group including 10 or more minors) may be used:

- 1) Without the signed written consent of parents or legal guardians, providing that the photo was taken in an open forum where the general public is invited to attend. Such situations include but are not limited to, during a service in the sanctuary, a church sponsored event in the church dining room, private property on which a church picnic is hosted, and any public place such as a park.

- 2) A “Website & Publications Photo Release Form” has been signed by a parent or legal guardian if the photo was taken in a non-public place. Such places include but are not limited to, Sunday School classrooms, Youth Group meeting rooms and the Nursery.
- 3) No names, identifying or contact information is used

### **Personnel Committee Responsibilities**

It shall be the responsibility of the church Personnel Committee to:

- 1) Give each newly hired employee a copy of the Child and Youth Safety Policy.
- 2) Include a copy of the policy in the Personnel Manual.
- 3) Include a written obligation to enforce the policy into the contract of each employee who has significant responsibility for supervising employees or volunteers who lead children or youth (e.g. Christian Educators, Youth Choir Director, the Associate Pastor for Youth)

### **Parental Responsibilities**

Parents are partners in protecting the welfare of children, and should be aware of the First Presbyterian Church Child and Youth Safety Policy. Parents are encouraged to ask teachers and staff questions about any concerns. Parents are responsible:

- 1) For the welfare of their children while on church premises when not participating in church-sponsored youth programs and activities.
- 2) To provide written permission for their children to meet individually with a church employee or volunteer (whether on-site or off-site).
- 3) For following check-in and check-out procedures for nursery, pre-school and elementary age children.
- 4) To coordinate with youth leaders (employee or volunteer) the release of middle school and high school students from church sponsored programs and activities.
- 5) For completing a photo release form for all church publications in print, electronic, or video form. (Must be amended as necessary to correspond with policy section.)

### **Initial Reporting of reasonable suspicion about child abuse or inappropriate activity**

What is reasonable suspicion?

Reasonable suspicion of abuse can be based on:

- Witnessing the abuse yourself
- Noticing the warning signs of abuse in a child
- When an adult, parent, or child confides in you

## **Instructions for reporting adult**

The reporting adult shall:

- 1) Take action by calling Kalamazoo County Child Protective Services immediately (within 24 hours) at (269) 337-5046.
  - All calls are completely confidential.
  - A trained CPS specialist will ask a short series of questions to help determine what is occurring and why you are concerned.
  - You need not give your name or address.
  - If there is a reasonable suspicion that abuse or neglect is taking place, CPS will take appropriate action to safeguard the children involved.
- 2) Report suspicion of abuse (within 24 hours) to one of the following staff of First Presbyterian Church:
  - The Pastor/ Head of Staff
  - Associate Pastor
  - Health Ministry Coordinator
  - Christian Education Staff person
- 3) Document the date, time, and circumstance of the alleged incident.
- 4) For purposes of confidentiality, do not discuss the suspicion of abuse with any other party.

## **FPC response to allegations of abuse**

- 1) All allegations shall be regarded as serious, and due consideration shall be given to protect the dignity, rights and privacy of the alleged victim, the reporting individual and the person being accused.
- 2) The staff person receiving the initial report will communicate to the parents or legal guardian that an allegation has been reported to Kalamazoo County Child Protective Services, unless the person whom is accused is a parent.
- 3) The person who is being accused will be required to refrain from participating in all child and youth activities pending investigation and resolution.
- 4) The Pastor/Head of Staff will convene the FPC Response Coordination Group (RCG). Members of the RCG will include:
  - The Pastor/Head of Staff
  - Health Ministry Coordinator
  - A Ruling Elder
- 5) The Response Coordination Group will provide oversight to all related actions including:
  - Ensuring appropriate contact and cooperation with civil and criminal authorities as required by law, and consistent with the PCUSA Book of Order.
  - Maintaining pertinent documents
- 6) The Pastor/Head of Staff will provide spiritual counseling
- 7) The Health Ministry Coordinator will assist involved individuals with information/access to appropriate community resources.
- 8) Protecting confidence, the Elder will communicate the occurrence of a report of suspected child abuse to the session and if appropriate, to the congregation.
- 9) Together, the Elder and Head of Staff will work with the Presbytery in matters pertaining to the reported incident.
- 10) Session shall have discretion to reinstate a person who has been the subject of unsubstantiated allegations.

## **Staff Care of Documents**

- 1) Only the Christian Educator and Christian Education Committee chairperson (or ruling elder on the CE Committee) will review forms filled out by volunteers.
- 2) All information will be treated in a confidential manner. In the case of a response to a report of suspicious activity, only the Response Coordination Team and the appropriate legal authorities shall have access to the information on these documents.
- 3) The documents will be kept in secure storage by a designated support staff person.
- 4) References may be contacted by the appropriate staff persons before the individual begins service.
- 5) Volunteers will be required to complete a Child and Youth Volunteer Application form once every five (5) years. In the interim years, volunteers will be required to complete a "Child and Youth Volunteer Short Form," verifying that the information provided in their application is still accurate and truthful.

## **Background Check Procedure**

Upon receipt of a completed "Background Inquiry Release Form, Presbytery of Lake Michigan," the Director of Christian Education will:

- 1) Provide the applicant with a copy of "A Summary of Your Rights under the Fair Credit Report Act"
- 2) Request the Presbytery of Lake Michigan to initiate the following background searches:
  - a) Sex Offender for the state of Michigan (free)
  - b) State of Michigan Criminal (free)
  - c) Motor Vehicle Record (\$3.50) for those completing the "Volunteer Driver Form"
  - d) National Criminal File Plus (\$6.50) for applicants who have lived in the state of Michigan for less than three years

Presbytery of Lake Michigan Contact:

Leslie Keusch, Office Administrator  
Presbytery of Lake Michigan  
1511 Helen Avenue  
Portage, MI 49002  
269.381.6337 / 888.271.6567  
269.381.6125 (fax)  
[lkeusch@lakemichiganpresbytery.org](mailto:lkeusch@lakemichiganpresbytery.org)