



## CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### Philosophy

"As God who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct. Tend the flock of God that is in your charge..." I Peter 2:15 and 5:2a.

It is a mission of the church as a community of faith to maintain an environment free from any form of physical, verbal, or sexual misconduct by any person in a position of authority and trust, whether an employee or a volunteer, whether ordained to church office or not. As the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA) states, "The ethical conduct of all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ is of vital importance to the church because through these representatives is conveyed an understanding of God and the gospel's good news. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and the world." (G6.0106).

### Policy Statement and Purpose

As a caring Christian community, we at Christ Presbyterian Church (CPC) are committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children and for all those working with children involved in the congregational life of CPC. The intention of this policy is to protect children from child abuse and to ensure that those working with children are not subjected to false or unwarranted charges of child abuse.

Additionally, organizations affiliated with CPC shall provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and those working with children.

### Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

- **Affiliated organization** means a group, association, or entity that is either chartered by or sponsored by CPC and that regularly utilizes CPC facilities.
- **Child** means any individual who is considered to be a minor under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, including an individual who is legally incapacitated.
- **Child abuse** includes the following:
  - (1) The actual infliction, the threat to inflict or create, or the permitting of another to inflict or threaten to inflict or create a physical or mental injury upon a child, by other than accidental means, or the creation of a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental function.
  - (2) The refusal to provide care necessary to the health and safety of a child, or the abandonment of a child, in one's care.
- **Sexual abuse or misconduct** includes touching or non-touching interaction for the purpose of sexual stimulation between a child and an adult. This behavior is always considered forced when the interaction involves a child and an adult, whether or not the victim has consented
- **Employee** means an individual who is hired or called to work for CPC for salary or wages.
- **Volunteer** means an individual who provides services to CPC without monetary remuneration.
- **Member volunteer** means a volunteer who
  1. has been a member of CPC for not less than six months; and
  2. has been authorized by the Session to work with children.

- **Provisional volunteer** means a volunteer who
  1. is not a member of CPC; or
  2. has been a member of CPC for less than six months; or
  3. is a member of CPC but has not yet been authorized by Session to work with children.
- **Supervision** includes direct observation, control and visual monitoring of activities.

### **Standards of Conduct**

- No employee or volunteer shall engage in any act of child abuse.
- No employee or volunteer shall touch, interact with, or otherwise communicate with a child in any way that is intended to be sexually stimulating, emotionally demeaning, or exploitative.
- Common expressions of affection and affirmation (including hugs and pats on the back) or physical care (including diaper changes and first aid) are appropriate in this and any other community of caring Christians. Care must be taken, however, that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed on another individual.
- Employees and volunteers who work with children are tasked with guarding the physical and emotional safety of those in their care and with being alert for signs of each child's well being.
- No employee or volunteer shall use corporal punishment on a child during any program or activity conducted by CPC.
- To the maximum extent practicable, there shall be visual access into each room in which activities with children are being conducted.
- Employees and volunteers who work with children shall work in unrelated pairs, with two or more adults present with children at all activities.
- Each provisional volunteer who works with children shall work under the supervision of an employee or a member volunteer at all times.
- If an unaccompanied employee or member volunteer meets with a single child to conduct a private discussion, at least one parent or guardian of the child must be aware of the meeting, and that meeting shall be held at CPC when the church is open for scheduled group activities or shall be held in a public place. In no case shall an unaccompanied employee or volunteer meet with a single child at CPC unless there is at least one other employee or member volunteer in the building who is aware that the private meeting is being held and knows the location of that meeting.
- With respect to any church-sponsored activity for which CPC arranges transportation, one employee or member volunteer may transport children as long as there are two or more children in the vehicle. Children will be picked up and dropped off as a group at CPC or at another designated central locations. Exceptions to this clause may be made in the case of medical or family emergencies. (Privately arranged transportation is not addressed by this clause.) In the case of Preschool field trips, the Preschool Director may approve the use of provisional volunteers for transportation as long as there are two or more children in the vehicle.

## **Allegations of Child Abuse**

- Any individual who has a reasonable suspicion of child abuse shall promptly report the suspicion to the pastor or the Clerk of Session. If the alleged offender is an employee, the report shall be made to the Clerk of Session.
- The pastor or the Clerk of Session, as applicable, shall ensure that any allegation of child abuse is reported to the proper authorities in accordance with applicable law of the Commonwealth of Virginia. In northern Virginia, that report is to be made to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (1-800-552-7096) or to Child Protective Services (703-324-7400) not later than 72 hours after the suspicion is reported. By law, reports of child abuse are strictly confidential.
- The Session shall appoint a 3-member Session response team to coordinate the response in cooperation with Presbytery and government authorities.
- The Clerk of Session or another person designated by the Session shall notify the General Presbyter and Stated Clerk of National Capital Presbytery if an allegation is raised against an ordained minister, an employee or member of CPC. The Clerk of Session or another person designated by the Session shall request guidance on the procedure to be followed in processing any allegation and, if necessary, for obtaining a moderator for the Session.
- The Pastor (or, in the absence of the Pastor, the Acting Head of Staff) or the Clerk of Session, as applicable, shall contact the Presbytery's Response Coordinating Team (or any successor team).
- In each case of alleged child abuse, the Pastor or the Clerk of Session shall contact and involve CPC's liability insurance carrier and verify that Child Protective Services has been notified and that the proper written documentation of the allegations and proceedings is maintained.
- The Pastor and/or the Clerk of Session or such other person(s) as designated by the Session shall be responsible for maintaining contact with the police and with the family of each alleged victim and for determining further actions in consultation with the Session. Additionally, the Pastor and/or the Clerk of Session or such other person(s) as designated by the Session will speak on behalf of the session in the event of an allegation that requires speaking to the congregation and or the community.
- CPC will cooperate fully with government authorities in the investigation of any suspicion of child abuse.

## **Implementation**

- A copy of this policy and the Child Protection Covenant shall be provided to each employee and volunteer participating in the life of the congregation.
- Each employee shall submit to CPC a signed copy of the Child Protection Covenant and shall submit to a background check as a condition of employment.

- Each applicant for employment shall submit to CPC a signed copy of the Child Protection Covenant as part of his or her application for employment and shall be willing to submit to a background check as a condition of employment.
- An individual who seeks to be a member volunteer in any CPC program or activity involving children shall submit to CPC a completed copy of the CPC volunteer application and a signed copy of the Child Protection Covenant and shall be willing to submit to a background check. A volunteer applicant who is a minor shall have the application and Child Protection Covenant co-signed by a parent or guardian. A volunteer applicant may work as a provisional volunteer under the direct supervision of an employee or a member volunteer pending review of the application.
- In general, an application by an individual to volunteer in any program or activity involving children shall be accepted only after a minimum of six months of active membership by that individual at CPC. An exception may be made at the discretion of the Session or a body authorized by the Session to allow for the short term involvement of an individual in an activity involving children (such as a service project, Vacation Bible School, Sunday morning childcare, etc.). In any such case, the provisional volunteer shall be paired with an employee or a member volunteer.
- Each provisional volunteer shall submit to CPC a signed copy of the Child Protection Covenant.
- Organizations affiliated with CPC shall either show proof of a comparable child protection policy in place or agree to abide by CPC's Child Protection Policy.

### **Administration**

- The Session shall administer this policy.
- All documentation associated with this policy (including applications, background checks, and documentation associated with allegations of child abuse or misconduct) shall be strictly confidential and shall be kept secure by the Administrative Taskforce (Admin Taskforce).
- The Session shall be responsible implementing procedures, processing applications, and granting appropriate authorization of employees, applicants for employment, and volunteers participating in programs or activities involving children. The authorization process shall allow applicants the opportunity to correct or respond to information obtained from a background check. For purposes of the initial implementation of this policy, the Admin Taskforce shall determine the manner in which initial authorizations shall be granted.
- The Admin Team shall establish a schedule for reviewing and updating employee and volunteer authorizations.

### **Member Awareness**

- The congregation shall be informed of this policy upon its adoption by the Session and shall be reminded of this policy annually with an announcement during Rally Day in the Fall of each year.

- This policy, the Child Protection Covenant, and the volunteer application form shall be made available on the Internet website of CPC.
- This policy and the Child Protection Covenant shall be published annually in the “Tuesday Tidbits” prior to Rally Day.
- A copy of this policy, the Child Protection Covenant, and the volunteer application form shall be provided to each participant in each prospective member class as his or her reception as a member by the Session.
- Anyone who works with children shall be requested to review this policy and sign the Child Protection Covenant not less than annually.

A review of this policy shall be included in

1. an annual Sunday School teach training session;
2. training sessions for childcare, music, youth or worship volunteers;
3. a training session for new Elders and Deacons; and
4. annual Preschool staff orientation or training.

A copy of this policy shall be posted in a central location at CPC.



Christ  
Presbyterian  
CHURCH

## CHILD PROTECTION COVENANT

I ACCEPT the responsibility to nurture the well-being of the children of Christ Presbyterian Church and to care for them as Christ cares for me. “I will tend the flock of God that is in my charge, exercising oversight...willing, as God would have me do it...” 1 Peter 5:2

I AGREE to submit to the authority of the Session of Christ Presbyterian Church in all matters related to child protection.

I HAVE READ and UNDERSTAND and AGREE TO ABIDE BY the Child Protection Policy of Christ Presbyterian Church.

I UNDERSTAND that all member volunteers and employees, as defined in the Child Protection Policy, may undergo a background check by the Virginia State Police or other appropriate agency, cost of the background check to be paid by Christ Presbyterian Church.

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Signature

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Date