

Christ Presbyterian Church
Toledo, Ohio
Child Protection Policy

I. Statement of Purpose.

Christ Presbyterian Church is committed to maintaining a safe environment for every child (0 to 12 years old) and youth (13 to 18 years old) involved in its program ministry. We are committed, not only to maintaining a community, but also to building it, and not only to maintaining trust, but also to enriching the atmosphere of trust in our community.

In today's environment, a well-balanced, proactive prevention policy is necessary for any institution entrusted with the care of children and youth. In response, Christ Presbyterian Church has established this Child Protection Policy. The Policy applies to all those who work with children and youth through programs both on and off campus, including full-time and part-time staff, nursery workers, and volunteers, whether they be church members, visitors, or guests.

II. Statement of Policy

Christ Presbyterian Church is committed to maintaining a safe environment in which children and youth are nurtured and instructed in the faith, and protected from abuse and neglect. Our goals are to protect children and youth in church programs, to educate workers and care givers concerning abuse issues, and to protect staff and volunteers, as well as the church as a whole, from potential wrongful accusations of abuse or neglect.

We recognize that children and youth are entrusted to the care of adults in church programs and activities, both on and off the campus, and also in programs operated by others on church property. They will be free to participate in these programs and activities without intimidation, coercion, or abuse of any type. This general policy is applicable to all persons whether compensated staff, volunteers, church members, visitors, or guests.

III. Implementation of Policy

Implementation of the Policy will include:

- Careful selection of staff, teachers, youth mentors/leaders, care givers and others routinely involved in activities with children and youth;
- Training and orientation on CPC fire and emergency policies and procedures;
- Supervision of these individuals;
- Accurate reporting of incidents of child abuse or neglect;
- Responding to incidents or allegations of abuse or neglect;
- Monitoring the policy and procedures to insure compliance; and
- Healing process for the congregation.

The Personnel Team, the Youth Ministry Team, and the Children and Family Ministry Team shall be responsible for the oversight, monitoring and enforcement of the Policy.

IV. Selection and Screening of Child/Youth Workers and Volunteers

A. Application process

- 1) Adult volunteers. All adults that wish to volunteer to work with youth/children in Christ Presbyterian-sponsored programs or events must complete the confidential application form included with this Policy and consent to and pass background checks, including criminal and reference checks.
- 2) Youth volunteers. All youth who wish to volunteer to work with youth/children under adult supervision must complete the youth application form and workers pledge.
- 3) Six-month waiting period. All non-employee applicants must have been a member of Christ Presbyterian or affiliated with Christ Presbyterian for a period of six months to be eligible to apply to volunteer to work with children/youth.
- 4) Employee applications. All employees must complete a confidential application form and consent to and pass background checks, including criminal and reference checks.

B. Screening Process

- 1) Application review. The Personnel Committee is responsible for oversight of application review. A sub-committee, composed of the Chair of the Personnel Committee, or his/her designee; the Chair of the Youth Ministry Team, or his/her designee; the Chair of the Children and Family Ministry Team, or his/her designee, and the appropriate staff as designated by the Pastor, will be responsible for receipt, review, and verification of applications, including reference checks. The sub-committee may also conduct interviews. Applicants approved by the subcommittee will form a pool of volunteers eligible for ministry to children and youth, subject to additional background checks to be performed by the Financial Secretary.
- 2) Background checks. The Financial Secretary, or another person as designated by the Pastor when the Financial Secretary is not available, will perform all criminal background checks, including additional reference checks, where appropriate.
- 3) Confidentiality. The Financial Secretary will keep each application, subcommittee notes on reference checks and interviews, and the results of any background or reference checks performed by the Financial Secretary, in a locked and confidential location. The results of any individual's reference checks and background checks are to be kept strictly confidential.

- 4) Information of concern. If information of a cautionary nature is revealed through a reference or background check, the person conducting the check shall note this information in writing for the application file and communicate it to the Pastoral staff. The Pastor and/or his/her designee, the immediate supervisor of the employee/volunteer, and the Personnel Team Chair shall consider this information and decide on a course of action. The decision must be documented in writing, dated, and placed in the person's file. In such case, the person's volunteer application may be:
 - a) Accepted unconditionally;
 - b) Accepted with clearly defined restrictions; or
 - c) Denied.

The Pastor, and/or his/her designee, shall inform the employee/volunteer of the decision and its implications.

- 5) Applications subject to review. Christ Presbyterian reserves the right to review applications at any time. Background checks or new reference checks may be requested either randomly or because of some concern.

C. Inapplicability to Occasional and/or Sporadic Volunteers. This Article VI and the application and screening requirements set forth herein are not intended to apply to non-employees who volunteer to work with youth/children in Christ Presbyterian Church-sponsored programs or events only on an occasional and sporadic basis. This Article VI shall apply to all Christ Presbyterian Church employees, regardless of whether they will be working with youth/children in the course of their employment. By way of example only, non-employee volunteers who volunteer to chaperone youth/children's choir practice during a few practices each year should not be required to undergo the application and screening process set forth herein; however, a non-employee volunteer who commits to chaperone and participate in youth/children's choir practice on a regular, routine and consistent basis, will be asked to undergo the application and screening process. Whenever a question arises about whether a non-employee volunteer's interaction with Christ Presbyterian Church-sponsored youth/child programs is occasional and sporadic, or regular, routine and consistent, the determination shall be made by the Personnel Committee.

V. Guidelines for Workers

These guidelines shall apply to all individuals who work with children or youth, including staff and volunteers, whether church members or guests.

- A. Two adult rule. Two adults (over the age of 18) will be present during children/youth activities. In an emergency situation, only one adult need be present for on campus activities if classroom doors are left open (doors with unobstructed, transparent windows may be closed).
- B. Individual Pastoral Care. When more individualized pastoral care is appropriate for children/youth, there should be a ratio of 2 adults to 1 youth, or 1 adult to 2 youth. One on one ministry with children/youth should be avoided if possible in order to protect all involved. When necessary, one on one ministry should take place on campus in rooms

with unobstructed, transparent windows where the adult and the child/youth can be seen at all times. This rule applies to all volunteers, staff, and pastors.

C. Youth workers.

- 1) Youths (13 to 18 years old) who wish to help with childcare must be certified for babysitting through Red Cross or an equal certification program, and must complete and sign the youth application form and worker's pledge.
- 2) Certified youths may assist the two adult care givers in child care as aides, but may not be solely responsible and may not be left in a room alone with children.

D. Nurseries.

- 1) A sign-in/out and pager system will be used for all nursery children. This system will enable the caregivers in the nursery to correctly identify a parent or guardian when a child is picked up.
- 2) Only the assigned caregivers and staff are allowed to stay in the nursery. Parents/guardians may enter the room to sign-in/out their child, but must exit the room promptly. All others must remain outside the room.

E. Duty to report. Individuals who observe questionable or inappropriate behavior affecting children/youth must report it as soon as possible to the appropriate supervising staff person, or to one of the ministers. The supervising staff person will notify the Pastor. The Pastor, or his/her designee, shall document the report in accordance with Section VI below. If the alleged incident involves the Pastor or Associate Pastor, a report shall be made to the Chair of Personnel Committee and the Clerk of Session, who will report the incident to the General Presbyter of the Maumee Valley Presbytery.

F. Awareness. Adults are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for abuse and to appearances of abuse. They should not hesitate to exercise appropriate responsibility if they observe activities that are, or might appear to be, inappropriate.

G. Continuing applicability. Procedures should be followed before, during, and after events while children are not in the custody of parents or guardians.

H. Injury/Accident Reports. For any injury (scratches and bumps too!) to a child under age 18 an accident report should be completed with one copy given to the parent and one copy to either the Director of Children and Family Ministry (infants – 5th grade) or the Associate Pastor (6th – 12th grades). If neither the Director of Children and Family Ministry nor the Associate Pastor is present on church premises, the accident report should be left in the appropriate staff person's labeled mailbox in the copy/work room.

I. Overnight outings. It is our intention to have two adults supervising any group of youth/children at all times. No minor or group of minors should ever be left overnight in the care of only one adult. **Same-sex, adult supervision will be provided for ALL overnight trips.** In situations like a retreat, adult/youth supervision may be accomplished with adult advisors from other churches, provided that such adult supervisors undergo the

application and screening process set forth in Section IV.A.1., above, or the other church has comparable child protection policy in place.

- J. Supervision. Each Ministry Team, and all staff working with children/youth are responsible for making certain that proper supervision is in place for workers in their programs and activities. Every Children/Youth Ministry Leader and all staff working with children/youth are responsible for reporting to the Session, by the September Session meeting each year, that proper procedures are in place within his/her area of responsibility to promote compliance with these guidelines.
- K. Security. When Christ Presbyterian Church youth/children programs are occurring during times that the Christ Presbyterian Church is open to the public (e.g., Godly Play on Sunday mornings), every effort shall be made to ensure that a hallway monitor is present to monitor access of third-parties to and/from the classroom or other location of such youth/children's program, and youths or children who may be unattended in the hallway. Any unattended youth/child shall be returned to their parent(s) or their classroom or other program location. Every Children/Youth Ministry Leader and all staff working with children/youth shall endeavor to prevent youth/children from being left unattended (whether in a hallway or otherwise).

VI. Procedure for Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Abuse

The following procedures will be followed in the event of an incident or allegation of abuse:

- A. Report. The person reporting the incident will document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances to the appropriate staff person and the Pastor as soon as possible. The incident will be reported to Lucas County Children Services or law enforcement as appropriate. If the alleged incident involves the Pastor or Associate Pastor, a report shall be made to the Chair of the Personnel Team and Clerk of Session, who will report the incident to the General Presbyter. Procedures for handling allegations against pastors are governed by abuse policies approved by the Maumee Valley Presbytery.
- B. Notify parents/guardians. The Pastor or Associate Pastor will notify the parents/guardians of the suspected victim of the incident as soon as possible.
- C. Document all actions. The Pastor, or his/her designee, and an appropriate staff person, will document all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident.
- D. Minister to all concerned. The church will minister, as possible, to individuals who in good faith make reports of actual or reasonably suspected cases of abuse, to those who are accused, and those who are abused. All reports will be taken seriously, but not judged prematurely.
- E. Law enforcement to investigate. Only the appropriate law enforcement authorities will carry out in-depth investigation.
- F. Report to Insurer. The Pastor or his/her designee will make the appropriate report to the liability insurer for the church.

- G. Treatment of accused. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities until the investigation is completed and allegations are cleared.
- H. Statements to the media. The Pastor or his/her designee will be the SOLE spokesperson for the church insofar as media inquiries are concerned. In the event the Pastor is the accused, the Associate Pastor shall be the spokesperson. If neither the Pastor nor the Associate Pastor is in a position to serve as spokesperson, the Personnel Team shall appoint a spokesperson on behalf of the church.
- I. Confidentiality. To the extent possible, confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded.

VII. Healing the Congregation

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which in deed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing songs to God. And whatever you do, in word and deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Col. 3:12-17

At Christ Presbyterian Church we take every precaution we possibly can to protect our children; however, we have to recognize that incidents may occur. These situations can have a tremendous impact on the individuals, as well as the entire congregation. To help the community of faith deal with this betrayal of trust, these are five main components necessary for the healing process:

- A. Truth telling. We have to acknowledge what has happened. Ignoring the issue could only make things worse.
- B. Sharing and validation of feelings. There are many emotions that surround the betrayal of trust: shock, anger, disbelief, and fear. In order to help the community of faith acknowledge and validate these feelings as well as find some resolution, we encourage group mediation with a trained pastoral counselor.
- C. Education. Commitment to the safety and well being of children and youth is our number one priority. We have to communicate that commitment to the congregation in order for trust to be reestablished. We also must reeducate members on how we can collectively protect our children.
- D. Spiritual reflection. In a community of faith we turn to God for guidance and direction, especially during difficult times. We turn to scripture, like the words Paul gave to the Colossians (Col. 3:12-17) during their crisis, or the comforting words of Psalm 23, and we pray that the "peace of Christ will rule in our hearts." We turn to God in prayer and emphasize the grace of Jesus Christ that will lift us up and love us forever.

- E. Where do we go from here? Answering the question, “What else do we have to do in order to be able to heal?” As a congregation and as the body of Christ, where do we go from here? What do we need to do to mend ourselves so that we can go about the mission of the church – which is to glorify and serve God?

This policy was adopted by the Session of
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