

Child Protection Policy

First Presbyterian Church, Kosciusko

Version 2.3, October 2016

Section 1. Corporate Biblical Commitment

Since the Apostle Paul instructs Timothy to uphold the gospel message in power, love, and self-control, “For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord... But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.” (2 Timothy 1:7, 13-14)

And since he exhorts Timothy to pursue godliness and keep the word of God free from reproach, “But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Timothy 6:11-14)

And whereas Paul exhorts the Ephesians to be like God in separating themselves from sexual immorality and exposing the despicable works of darkness, “Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ...Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:1-3, 6-17)

Likewise the Apostle Peter calls us away from sinful passions into sober-minded preparation, “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope

fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” (1 Peter 1:13-16)

And Paul elsewhere requires parents to care for their households, “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8)

So also, the Lord Jesus Christ himself teaches us about the severity of sinning against children, “And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, ‘Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.’” (Matthew 18:2-6)

Thereafter, the Lord Jesus also instructs us to cut off anything that might lead us into sin, “And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.” (Matthew 18:8-9)

And finally, Jesus sends us into the world with an exhortation towards wisdom and innocence, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” (Matthew 10:16)

Therefore, the Session of First Presbyterian Church (PCA) of Kosciusko, MS, hereby institutes a comprehensive Child Protection Policy to provide for the safety and protection of the children whom God has entrusted to our care and to mitigate the potential for their abuse, effective January 1, 2015.

This Policy can be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the Session.

Sections 1 through 6.2 of this policy were approved and adopted by the Session of First Presbyterian Church on December 3, 2014.

Sections 5.3.4, 5.3.5, and 5.4.3 were amended on March 25, 2015.

Section 6.2 was amended, and sections 6.3 through 6.9 were adopted on November 6, 2016.

Section 2. Observations and Principles

First Presbyterian Church (PCA) exists as an ecclesiastical body in covenant with one another under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Christ's lordship and concern for his flock leads First Presbyterian Church to commit itself to a coherent and comprehensive Child Protection Policy and explanation of our covenant responsibility to one another and to our Lord for the well-being of our covenant children and visitors.

The governing body of First Presbyterian Church is the Session, which consists of those Ruling Elders currently on rotation together with the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor(s). Responsibility for the affairs and events that occur either within the FPC facilities, on FPC property, or during FPC ministry events—whether onsite or offsite—belongs to this governing body.

First Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe, secure, and nurturing environment in which all people can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ. This includes an environment free from physical, verbal, and sexual abuse.

The Bible calls us to work together with one another in the local church as we seek to worship God, make disciples, and love others by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We therefore need the assistance and accountability of our brothers and sisters in Christ. This assistance and accountability is strengthened through the following guidelines, procedures, and rules, *which apply to all persons, whether staff, officers, volunteers, members, visitors, and/or guests.*

The following guidelines are intended to help us understand our obligations to all members and visitors at First Presbyterian Church, but particularly to our children and youth.

Section 3. Purpose

First Presbyterian Church is committed to maintaining an environment in which children and youth are protected from physical, emotional, and sexual harm, and in which church staff, teachers, and volunteers are protected from potential false allegations of abuse and/or negligence. **The purpose of this Policy is to establish an overarching plan that (1) provides for the safety and protection of the children and youth whom God has entrusted to our care, and (2) decreases the potential for child abuse, and (3) mitigates the potential for false allegations against staff, members, and volunteers.** Additionally, this policy incorporates protocols for expeditiously evaluating and reporting allegations of abuse and negligence.

The Plan and Protocols are intended to protect children and youth from harm in church-sponsored events on site at FPC property and/or away from FPC property for ministry-related outings (*e.g.*, mission trips, retreats, and pastoral visits). This policy also applies to other individuals and organizations that make use of FPC facilities, including but not limited to Presbyterian Day School.

Section 4. Definitions

Child Abuse and Neglect: Any action (or lack thereof) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. See further definitions below.

- **Physical Abuse** – Ann. Code § 43-21-105 – ‘Abused child’ means a child whose parent, guardian, custodian, or any person responsible for his or her care or support, whether or not legally obligated to do so, has caused or allowed to be caused upon the child non-accidental physical injury or other maltreatment.
- **Neglect** – Ann. Code § 43-21-105 – ‘Neglected child’ means a child:
 - Whose parent, guardian, custodian, or any person responsible for his or her care or support neglects or refuses, when able to do so, to provide proper and necessary care or support; education as required by law; or medical, surgical, or other care necessary for his or her well-being;
 - Who is otherwise without proper care, custody, supervision, or support;
 - Who, for any reason, lacks the special care made necessary for him or her by reason of his or her mental condition, whether said mental condition be mentally retarded or mentally ill;
 - Who, for any reason, lacks the care necessary for his or her health, morals, or well-being.
- **Sexual Abuse/Exploitation** – Ann. Code § 43-21-105 – The term ‘Abused child’ includes sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.
 - ‘Sexual Abuse’ means obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depiction of children for commercial purposes, or the rape, molestation, incest, prostitution, or other such forms of sexual exploitation of children under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened.
- **Emotional Abuse** – Ann. Code § 43-21-105 – The term ‘Abused child’ includes emotional abuse or mental injury (*e.g.*, when the child is subjected to constant criticism, belittling, or teasing).
- **Exceptions** – Ann. Code § 43-21-105
 - A Parent who withholds medical treatment from any child who in good faith is under treatment by spiritual means alone through prayer, in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof, shall not, for that reason alone, be considered to be neglectful.
 - Physical discipline, including spanking, performed on a child by a parent, guardian, or custodian in a reasonable manner shall not be deemed abuse under this section.

Children, Youth, or Minors: Any person who has not reached his or her 18th birthday.

DHS: Mississippi Department of Human Services

FPC: First Presbyterian Church

High Isolation Settings: A location that has little or small amounts of traffic, restrictive access, and/or low visibility from outside. It includes, but is not limited to, bathrooms, closets, and classrooms/offices with no windows. Specific high isolation areas may be denoted at future dates.

Mandatory Reporters: Professionals working in the medical field (physicians, dentists, interns, residents, or nurses), public or private school employees or child-care givers, psychologists or social workers, attorneys, ministers, or law enforcement officers, as well as any persons having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused or neglected *are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect immediately to the proper authorities.*

- **Clergy:** “Any minister who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a neglected child or an abused child shall cause an oral report to be made immediately, by telephone or otherwise, to be followed as soon thereafter as possible by a report in writing to the Department of Human services.” (Ann. Code § 43-21-353(1))
 - *Mississippi Law does not grant ministers “clergy privilege” regarding allegations or confessions of abuse revealed during pastoral counsel or confessions.*

Members: Those adults and children who are listed on the church roll as belonging to the ecclesiastical body known as First Presbyterian Church.

PDS: Presbyterian Day School

Primary Reporter: The individual who, upon learning of abuse or neglect, bears primary responsibility for contacting the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

Staff: Any compensated individuals, including pastors, interns, and other paid employees of First Presbyterian Church, whether part-time or full-time.

Teacher: An adult who has been approved to teach a class (particularly of children) for a specified length of time on a regular basis. For example: Sunday School Teachers.

Volunteers: Unpaid persons who work with children, youth, and/or adults at FPC.

Section 5. Child Protection Plan

To prevent both incidents of abuse and the unfounded assertion of such conduct, First Presbyterian Church has developed appropriate procedures to be followed in the following areas:

- The training and screening 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 minors.

5.1 Policies and Procedures

- 5.1.1 **First Presbyterian Church and PDS are subject to Mississippi law regarding the protection of children.**
- 5.1.2 Internal investigations and church discipline regarding matters of abuse or neglect of children do not relieve FPC of its legal responsibility to report allegations of abuse or neglect to the proper authorities.
- 5.1.3 FPC seeks to prevent the abuse and neglect of children participating in church ministries. Preventative measures will include training, screening, and supervision of custodians of minors, particularly including staff and volunteers as defined in this policy.
- 5.1.4 It is the responsibility of the FPC staff member accountable for any FPC ministry that involves minors to ensure that appropriate practices are implemented within those programs and activities to reduce the risk of harm, especially harm arising from neglect or abuse. The specific circumstances of each ministry shall be considered in the development of those program-specific practices.
- 5.1.5 **Presbyterian Day School**, shall develop and implement a comparable child protection policy to be incorporated into their teacher training program. It shall also formulate independent protocols for reporting incidents of abuse. Any rule in the Child Protection Plan (SECTION 5) not met with a comparable rule in the PDS policy shall be considered binding on PDS.
- 5.1.6 **Entities or organizations that use FPC facilities** in any way that involves minors must agree to abide by this policy. Such use must be approved by the Session or their designee. *This includes individuals renting FPC facilities for lessons or activities involving minors.*
- 5.1.7 Parents who use FPC facilities for private purposes are responsible for the actions of all children, visitors, and childcare personnel who accompany them. Minors may not use FPC facilities without adult supervision.
- 5.1.8 The Session of First Presbyterian Church shall designate a person or committee of persons to oversee the implementation and maintenance of this policy.

5.2 Training

- 5.2.1 The Session shall designate a person, or group of persons, to conduct face-to-face educational sessions with *all volunteers* either in small groups or individually. These sessions have the purpose of communicating the obligations and commitments contained within this policy and insuring that our teachers, volunteers, and all others have the knowledge, understanding, and tools to safely, effectively, and consistently serve minors in a church setting. The educational training material is explained in the *Child Safety Training Manual*.
- 5.2.2 All volunteers must participate in one of these sessions, understand the material contained in the *Child Safety Training Manual*, and agree to abide by this Child Protection Policy.
- 5.2.3 In certain ministry programs, nametags identifying those who have been trained may be required to insure that all volunteers have been through the required training.

5.3 Screening

- 5.3.1 **All ministries of the church involving minors shall conduct screening procedures** for staff and volunteers involved in that particular ministry. The screening process will include an informal application-interview and a criminal background check.
- 5.3.2 **All FPC staff members**, whether part-time or full-time, **are required to go through screening procedures and receive a criminal background check.**
- 5.3.3 **Officers** of the church (elders and deacons), while they do not necessarily interact with children or youth on a regular basis, are encouraged to have a criminal background check.
- 5.3.4 All **volunteers who work with minors on a regular basis** (e.g., Sunday school teachers) **will go through the screening and training process and receive a criminal background check before taking responsibility in a ministry.** Volunteers who work with minors *occasionally*, who may have *unsupervised interaction* with minors, will receive a criminal background check and serve alongside an adult who has completed the screening and training process.
- (a) **Membership Requirement:** All volunteers should be members of FPC *for at least 6 months prior to working with minors.* Non-member volunteers may be approved by the Senior Pastor, provided they receive a criminal background check.

- (b) **Abstaining from Screening:** FPC members who wish to volunteer with children/youth *but do not wish to undergo a criminal background check* may still serve as volunteers *provided that* (a) they are never alone with minors, (b) they have been a member of FPC for at least 6 months, and (c) they are supervised by an adult who has completed the entire screening and training process.

5.3.5 The Session has the authority to give final approval for any volunteer and/or staff member to work in any given area of ministry.

5.4 Supervision

5.4.1 Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular visits in each program and ministry to provide opportunities to observe adult interactions with minors.

- (a) The Sunday School Superintendent will conduct regular, unscheduled observations of Sunday school classes involving minors.
- (b) The deacon on duty will conduct periodical, unscheduled observations of Sunday school classes and Wednesday night meetings involving minors.
- (c) The administrator of this policy will perform both scheduled and unscheduled visits in all ministry activities of the church involving minors.

5.4.2 **Principle of Visibility:** In all activities, classes, and events for our children and youth we want to maintain a high standard of visibility and accountability. There shall never be less than two minors alone with a teacher, worker, or volunteer. It is the adult leader's responsibility to ensure this and to establish a high visibility situation for the duration of the class/event. This must be done by satisfying at least one of the following conditions:

- (a) Two adults will be in attendance at all times. *This is our ideal and should be secured whenever possible.*
- (b) The door to the classroom will be open as long as only one adult is present with the class.
- (c) The room in which the class/event takes place will have high visibility to passersby through the form of a window through which either a) the whole room can be seen, or b) all participants can be seen.
- (d) The teacher/leader will take the group to a more visible location, such as the fellowship hall.

5.4.3 **Peer Supervision:** Providing adequate supervision for children in their care requires that all workers be vigilant that these policies are adhered to by all workers—staff member, volunteer, or youth.

- (a) Each classroom of minors will be supervised by at least one adult who has been through the screening and training process and received a criminal background check.
 - (b) *Minors are not allowed to be responsible for other minors without adult oversight in ministry activities*, unless they are certified babysitters.
 - i. Female youth who have reached 14 years of age (and male youth of at least 16 years of age) may serve as childcare “staff” or “volunteers” for nursery and elementary ages if they receive babysitting or childcare certification through the SafeSitter® program or the American Red Cross. This requirement is in addition to FPC training and screening procedures.
 - (c) Two persons per room is required for **nursery** staffing with one of the two needing to have had a criminal background check. Only adult female staff or volunteers are allowed to change diapers.
- 5.4.4 **One-on-One Ministry:** Any adult who meets one-on-one with minors should make every effort to use common sense and be safe in their interactions with children and youth. This is for the protection of the children and youth God has placed under our care as well as for the protection of the adults who seek to care for them. For that reason:
- (a) One-on-ones with minors should always be done in highly visible or public areas.
 - (b) Under no circumstances may an adult be alone with a minor without another adult within earshot.
- 5.4.5 **Restroom Guidelines:** Children should utilize a classroom bathroom if available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, a teacher/volunteer should escort the child or group of children to the nearest bathroom, and remain at the bathroom door. The teacher/volunteer should escort the child(ren) back to the classroom as soon as possible.
- (a) If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the teacher/volunteer should take appropriate common sense steps to assist the child in a safe and wise manner.
 - (b) All children younger than three and all female children may only be wiped by adult females.
 - (c) Minors may not assist children to the bathroom.
- 5.4.6 Any time a child has been entrusted to FPC staff or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge. This requires **releasing children** at the close of services and activities solely to parents, legal guardians, or other persons authorized by parents or legal guardians to pick up their children.

- (a) The Children's Ministry Coordinator shall develop, review, and implement sign-out procedures for nursery, Sunday school, and other children's ministry activities as necessary.
- (b) Children may not be released to minors.

5.4.7 **High Isolation Settings:** Minors may only enter these settings with two or more adults, one of whom has received a criminal background check.

5.5 Operations

5.5.1 The Diaconate of First Presbyterian Church is responsible for maintaining a facility that is safe for children, with appropriate safeguards to prevent injury, harm, and abuse as well as to restrict access from those who might intentionally harm those under the care of the Church.

- (a) When not in use, all offices, classrooms, closets, and high isolation settings shall remain locked.
- (b) An accounting of FPC keys shall be kept and the locks changed (including key codes) at reasonable, regular intervals to restrict access into FPC facilities.
- (c) Classroom areas and playgrounds need to be inspected at least every five years with the purpose of bringing them up to the appropriate codes of safety.
- (d) All rooms in which ministry to children occurs must have at least one window built into the door or interior wall to improve visibility into the classroom.

5.5.2 The Diaconate or their designee should regularly inspect all areas and facilities frequented by minors to ascertain its physical safety, visibility, and vulnerability to unwanted entry. Any safety concerns should be repaired in a prompt manner.

5.5.3 Whenever classes or groups involving minors need to change their permanent meeting space, the Diaconate and the designee of the Session will need to assess the new meeting space to ensure its safety and readiness to be used by minors.

5.5.4 Construction of new facilities and remodeling of current facilities shall from this time forward consider the safety of children in the building plans.

Section 6. Response & Reporting Protocols

It is our prayer that the preceding policies and procedures will protect our children and visitors from any abuse or neglect under our watch. In the interests of wisdom, however, it is necessary to have a prepared plan of response for allegations of abuse or neglect, whether the alleged incident(s) occur within the purview of our facilities and ministries or at the homes, schools, or other relations of the children in our care.

6.1 Summary of Mississippi Reporting Law

Mississippi Annotated Code §§ 43-21-105, 43-21-353

Any mandated reporter who has *reasonable cause* to suspect that a child is abused or neglected (see definitions provided in section 4 of this policy) shall immediately make an oral report to the Department of Human Services, to be followed as soon as possible by a written report. The oral report is to be given through The Mississippi Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Reporting Hotline System (**Local: 1-662-289-2104, State: 1-888-222-8000**). The proper contact information for filing the written report will be given to the reporter during the telephone report. The written report shall contain:

- The names and address(es) of the child, the child's parents, or other persons responsible for the child's care,
- The child's age,
- The nature and extent of injuries, including any evidence of prior injuries,
- Any other information that might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injury and the identity of the perpetrator.

Mississippi caselaw explains that “the duty to report suspected child abuse attaches to an individual the moment they are presented with a situation producing ‘reasonable cause’ for such suspicion. Hence, the standard for reporting is possessing suspicion of child abuse that is founded upon reasonable cause.” [*Howe v. Andereck*, 882 So.2d 240, 244 (Miss. Ct. App. 2004)]

Mandatory reporters are responsible to report immediately by telephone or otherwise, followed as soon as possible by a written report to the Mississippi Department of Human Services. Willful failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect can result in a fine of up to \$5,000 or imprisonment for up to one year or both (Ann. Code § 43-21-353(7)).

Miss. Ann. Code § 43-21-355 states that “any person participating in making a required report pursuant to the reporting laws or participating in a judicial proceeding resulting therefrom shall be presumed to be acting in good faith.” “Any person or institution reporting in good faith shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed.”

In the course of the report, the reporter may be asked to provide his/her own contact information, especially if they serve as material witness to abuse. The state worker assigned to the investigation will contact the reporter as the first step in the investigation, with the expressed purpose of getting additional information about the alleged incident of abuse/neglect, and to inform the reporter of the role and purpose of the Department of Human Services in its response to the report. A safety assessment by the worker will be completed within 7 calendar days of the report being assigned (Ann. Code § 11-006-102). It should be noted that Ann. Code § 43-21-353 indicates that the identity of the reporting party shall not be disclosed to anyone other than law enforcement

officers or prosecutors without an order from the appropriate youth court. The identity of the reporter shall not be disclosed to an individual under investigation.

Mississippi law makes no special exception for members of the clergy. Clergymen are therefore considered mandatory reporters as any other professional listed above.

6.2 General Provisions

- 6.2.1 Any witness of actions constituting abuse or neglect of minors occurring on FPC property or during FPC-sponsored events shall immediately inform the Senior Pastor. The same is true for persons who *bear allegations* of abuse or neglect occurring at FPC.
 - (a) In the interest of haste or if the Senior Pastor is unreachable, the report may also be given to the Elders Hugh Potts, Eddie Thomas, and Don Smith, or to the Assistant/Associate Pastor.
- 6.2.2 An “Incident Report” shall be composed to provide written testimony regarding potential harm to children at FPC, on retreats, or by FPC staff/volunteers. If possible, at least two witnesses shall provide a written account of the event. These shall be held in a confidential file should any civil or criminal case arise from such incident(s).
- 6.2.3 If an incident occurs on FPC property or during ministry events, the Senior Pastor or his designee shall act as primary reporter to the DHS and liaison with state workers and law enforcement personnel.
- 6.2.4 In the event that an in-depth investigation becomes necessary, it shall be carried out by DHS and/or appropriate law enforcement personnel and not by church staff, officers, or volunteers.
- 6.2.5 Unless there is immediate threat to the safety of a minor, FPC staff, members/volunteers, and officers shall allow DHS and law enforcement personnel to handle the safeguarding of the alleged/potential victim, the notification of parents/guardians, and the confrontation of the person accused of abuse. (If there is cause for immediate concern for the wellbeing of a minor, see section 6.7.5).
- 6.2.6 The needs and safety of a potential/alleged victim take priority over the accused.
- 6.2.7 Persons accused of criminal behavior towards a minor shall immediately be relieved of further responsibilities involving direct contact with minors until all investigations are 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.

- 6.2.8 The Senior Pastor or his designee shall report incidents of alleged abuse to FPC legal counsel and the liability insurer for the church.
- 6.2.9 In the event of a report of abuse or neglect, the Session of FPC shall designate a sub-committee of its membership to respond to reports of abuse or neglect involving FPC members, staff, volunteers, or officers.
- (a) This sub-committee may elect to form a response team composed of qualified persons to handle legal and pastoral matters pertaining to the abuse or neglect of minors.
- 6.2.10 The Senior Pastor or his designee will be careful to document all steps taken in the course of handling an incident and the report. The documentation shall be kept in a confidential file maintained by FPC.
- 6.2.11 All parties involved in an alleged incident, including the victim, the accuser, and the accused, shall be treated with dignity, support, and love. *The confidentiality of all persons involved shall be safeguarded to the fullest extent possible.*
- 6.2.12 The Senior Pastor shall be the sole spokesperson for the church insofar as **media inquiries** are concerned. However, where appropriate, the Session may designate another individual to act in such capacity with regard to a given case.

6.3 Responding to Questionable Conduct Involving Minors

- 6.3.1 All members of FPC staff, and other adults, participating in the ministries of FPC are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for the abuse of minors. They are encouraged to caution others if they observe conduct that they believe could be, or appear to be, questionable.
- 6.3.2 Even though observed questionable conduct may not itself be abusive, the witness shall report, as soon as practical or by the end of the business day, the observed action(s) to the FPC staff person directly responsible for the ministry program during which the action(s) occurred, or to the Senior Pastor.
- 6.3.3 The FPC staff person shall notify the Senior Pastor, and they will consult regarding any necessary action.

6.4 Unwanted or Dangerous Persons on Site

- 6.4.1 FPC is not a public facility. Therefore, any employee or member of FPC or PDS has the right to refuse entry or ask any person to leave at any time if they pose a threat to the safety of staff, volunteers, or children.
- (a) This pertains not only to the interior spaces of the church, but also to all external property and adjoining spaces, whether public or private (*e.g.*, someone standing in the road next to a playground).

- 6.4.2 If an unwanted person is unwilling to cooperate, assistance should be immediately sought from a male staff member. Continued resistance warrants a call to the police department (**non-emergency: 662-289-3131**). If possible, children in the area surrounding the unwanted person should be discretely vacated to a safe location.
- (a) If in a classroom, the teacher should lock the door to the classroom, move the children out of view, and place himself/herself next to the door until the all-clear is sounded.
- 6.4.3 We should seek to avoid an altercation with an intruder unless absolutely necessary. Those trying to remove him from the property should remain calm and utilize the presence and wisdom of available staff and volunteers. Do not hesitate to call the police if the intruder is unwilling to cooperate.
- (a) **911** should be called immediately *if things look to turn violent*.
- (b) The use of violent force (lethal and non-lethal) should be restrained unless it is absolutely necessary to protect the life of a potential victim.

6.5 Missing Persons & Abductions

- 6.5.1 *If a minor goes missing* during FPC events or on FPC property, and that child cannot be found within **10 minutes**, a team of at least 3 persons shall be assembled from adults on hand to search the area (internal and external spaces) for the missing person.
- 6.5.2 A person shall be designated to call anyone with whom the child may have received a ride to make sure that they did not get picked up or go home with someone else (*Note: this should never happen without prior permission from parents*).
- 6.5.3 If after **30 minutes** of searching the child cannot be found, **911** should be called and the Senior Pastor notified.

6.6 Handling Suspicions of Abuse or Neglect

- 6.6.1 If any member, volunteer, teacher, or staff member has suspicions regarding the potential abuse or neglect of children, whether or not it is tied to FPC, that person should seek the counsel of one of the pastors.
- 6.6.2 Unless there is reason to believe that abuse or neglect has occurred in the context of FPC ministries or facilities, the person having suspicions shall act as the primary reporter. FPC pastors are willing to assist members, staff, and volunteers in calling DHS and helping compose the written report.
- 6.6.3 In cases of suspicion, the first step to be taken should be continued and prayerful observation of and conversations with the child followed by discussions with the ministry supervisor, other volunteers who have regular interaction with the child, and the minor's parent/guardian where appropriate.

- 6.6.4 No one wants to be mistaken when reporting suspicions of abuse or neglect, however it is outside the scope of FPC to conduct investigations into child abuse and/or neglect. That is the proper role of the civil government. A strong suspicion of abuse or neglect amounts to reasonable cause and warrants a report.

6.7 Allegations & Confessions of Abuse

- 6.7.1 **Anyone who hears allegations or confessions of abuse or neglect** is responsible to **notify DHS** at **1-662-289-2104**. If possible, they shall provide the identity of the perpetrator, the identity of the victim, and the date(s) the abuse/neglect occurred.
- 6.7.2 A staff member or volunteer who hears allegations/confession is encouraged to notify the Senior Pastor of the communication and seek his support and counsel in handling the matter and further ministry to that person.
- 6.7.3 Pastors, staff, members, and volunteers are encouraged to notify adults and minors who confide in them, (especially if there is a request for confidentiality), that we have a responsibility to alert the proper authorities to allegations of child abuse/neglect, or threats of immediate harm to themselves or others.
- 6.7.4 If there is an **immediate threat of harm to a minor, a report must be made *immediately***. In such cases, **911 should be called first and then DHS**. The minor person may be brought to the FPC office *with the parent/guardian's permission* (unless the parent/guardian is the potential offender) until DHS or law enforcement personnel can take responsibility for the child.

6.8 Allegations against Staff and Volunteers

- 6.8.1 If allegations of abuse are made **against any staff member or volunteer** the Senior Pastor shall *immediately* be notified, as well as one of the following Ruling Elders: Hugh Potts, Eddie Thomas, or Don Smith. Allegations towards staff and volunteers shall be treated with utmost seriousness.
- (a) The Senior Pastor's first responsibility is to notify DHS and compose the written report (if not previously done by another party). He shall then notify the special sub-committee of the Session set apart for handling matters of abuse and/or neglect. He shall provide them with the date(s) of the incident and the names of those involved.
- (b) After notifying DHS and ascertaining the security of the alleged victim, the Senior Pastor and a designee of the Sub-Committee shall meet with the accused to issue notification that they are being temporarily relieved of responsibility involving minors. Staff members shall be suspended from all ministry activities for a minimum of *two weeks with pay*. After that point, the staff member may be allowed to return to work *barring contact with minors*.

- (c) A volunteer or staff person who is accused of criminal behavior towards a minor may not have direct contact with minors until all investigations are 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. (*Duplicated from 6.2.7.*)
- (d) The Session has a responsibility to protect ministers and staff against baseless charges and to protect the ministry of FPC. Therefore, the Session should not seek to *fire or dismiss* a staff member without some tangible cause. This could include, but is not limited to, charges being made in a court of law, proof/confession of inappropriate behavior, or a disruption so scandalous that it presents significant hurdles to future ministry.
- (e) The sub-committee may designate a person or group of persons to shepherd the victim(s), the family of the victim(s), and/or the accused.
- (f) In cases involving **ordained ministers**, the Shepherding and Advisory Committee of the Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley should be notified within 3 business days so that they may assist in the process of shepherding and discipline.

6.8.2 **Internal Investigations:** At times allegations may arise against volunteers and staff that are baseless and aimed at the defamation of character. Anytime allegations strike the Senior Pastor or members of the Sub-Committee as highly suspect—especially if accusations arise as hearsay or appear intentionally slanderous—then the Sub-Committee may opt to investigate the veracity of the accusations internally.

- (a) **The purpose of an internal investigation is to establish reasonable cause** for reporting to DHS when allegations of inappropriate conduct towards minors are highly suspect. *Internal investigations do not relieve the Senior Pastor of his responsibility to report when there is reasonable weight to an allegation.*
- (b) Internal investigations are to proceed by enlisting the aid of the special Sub-Committee for matters of abuse and neglect, and then by seeking legal counsel regarding the specific accusations. After receiving initial legal counsel, the Senior Pastor and a member of the Sub-Committee may consult with the accused regarding the veracity and circumstances surrounding the accusation. If the accusations or allegations warrant a legal report in the eyes of legal counsel, then the accused will be handled in accordance with 6.8.1. If, however, there is significant doubt as to the veracity of the claims, the staff person shall be placed on **probation** until the matter can be clarified.
 - i. **Probation for a volunteer** shall consist of being relieved of all responsibilities for ministering to minors, and he may not be unsupervised with a group of minors.

- ii. **Probation for a *staff person*** shall consist of constant supervision when working with minors by an adult who has been through the screening and training process, other than the spouse. In addition, staff persons on probation may not participate in one-on-one ministry or overnight events with minors, such as retreats, until such probation ends.
 - (c) Internal investigations should include phone calls to persons named in the accusation besides the accused, persons who worked closely with the accused when the offense is said to occur, ministry supervisors who worked with the accused when the offense is said to occur, and law enforcement who may have received reports of an offense.
- 6.8.3 If First Presbyterian Church is notified of allegations against a staff member or volunteer by law enforcement personnel, lawyers, or other legal officials, the Senior Pastor or his designee shall serve as liaison and cooperate fully with the investigation.
- 6.8.4 **In the case that the Senior Pastor is unavailable** (*e.g.*, on vacation/sabbatical, ill, or FPC is between pastors), the Session as a whole shall assume the responsibility of the Senior Pastor as it pertains to Section 6.8 of this policy. They shall then:
- (a) Designate one of their number (preferably the clerk) to make contact with DHS and serve as liaison with legal and law enforcement personnel.
 - (b) Designate someone to serve as media liaison, preferably an officer of the church (minister, elder, deacon).
- 6.8.5 **If allegations are made against the Senior Pastor**, the Session of First Presbyterian Church shall take over all prerogatives and privileges ordinarily belonging to the Senior Pastor as it pertains to these protocols. If accusations are made public, or if criminal charges are made, the Session shall discuss the temporary removal of the Senior Pastor from the pulpit.

6.9 Shepherding of Victim, Accuser, and Accused

- 6.9.1 For those who have never been abused, exploited, or neglected, it is hard to perceive the deep emotional wounds experienced by the victim and his/her family. The church has a responsibility to reach out to those who are violated in such ways with tenderness, compassion, and grace. There is no easy fix, and such situations frequently require years of counseling, prayer, and compassion. Victims frequently blame themselves and feel a deep sense of shame, even though they have done nothing wrong. As shepherds we must bear this in mind. Abuse is not something families and victims can just “get past.” It may mark them for the rest of their lives. What we can do, and should do, is listen, mourn, and pray.

- 6.9.2 While lay and ordained leadership are generally able to provide a listening ear, compassion, and biblical encouragement, the type of intensive counseling needed in instances of abuse is frequently that of licensed, professional help. To that end, FPC should maintain a list of quality referrals to provide to victim, family, or accused. Due to the prohibitive cost of seeing a quality mental health professional for any length of time, it would be wise for FPC to subsidize the counseling of members, particularly that needed by the victim and/or their family. *If the victim suffered under the watch of First Presbyterian Church, or at the hands of a staff person or volunteer, then providing quality counseling is obligatory.*
- 6.9.3 It is not uncommon for those who report or make an accusation/allegation of abuse and/or neglect to feel a great burden of responsibility, and perhaps misplaced guilt. They should be encouraged that they did the right thing, and it pleases God to stand up for the rights of the oppressed and abused. It matters not whether the accused is a person of good reputation or high social standing. Additionally, some persons may draw away from an accuser/reporter through a sense of fear that perhaps this person made a needless report. Thus, the Session should include the reporter/accuser in their prayers and surround them with the encouragement of Christ.
- 6.9.4 Handling abuse/neglect within the church is emotional and painful. People may feel that the leadership is not doing enough, or didn't do enough. The leadership and shepherds must remain calm and respond graciously. We must not render judgment about guilt, as that is for the justice system to determine. We must remain balanced in our perspective and tempered in our passions.
- 6.9.5 **Church discipline should be applied through due process (as set forth in the PCA Book of Church Order)** consequent to personal confession or legal verdict of guilt. As in any instance of church discipline, the goals of the Session in disciplining an offender are the glory of Christ, the purity of the church, and the restoration of the sinner. The spiritual state of the accused and his repentance and restoration are therefore primary concerns of the Session. *It should be additionally understood that preferential child molesters are adept at pretending repentance*; they are master manipulators and know how to tell people what they want to hear. Therefore, the help of a specialist should be acquired in determining the level of honest repentance in a child molester. Wisdom and care for the congregation may dictate that even a repentant child abuser relocate.

- 6.9.6 Those who are charged with crimes against children—particularly those who are found guilty—will live with the stigma of being a child molester for the rest of their earthly lives. Such sins can be and are forgiven by Christ, but the perpetrator will likely live in shame and disrepute. The church has a responsibility to act both in wisdom and in love towards child molesters who have genuinely repented of their sins and crimes. They may be welcomed in our fellowship and loved as brothers or sisters in Christ. However, the church has a responsibility to protect the children who are in covenant with us, and *we shall never allow a convicted child-abuser or sex-offender to participate in children's ministries or allow them to be alone with a minor.*

Section 7. Appendices

7.1 F.A.Q.s

7.2 The Screening Process

7.3 Forms

- 7.3.1 Statement of Understanding & Agreement
- 7.3.2 Primary Screening Form
- 7.3.3 Criminal Background Check
- 7.3.4 Incident Report

First Presbyterian Church
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is this policy necessary?

It is our moral and legal responsibility as Christians and a church to protect the children who are under our care. We need to hold one another accountable to this task, and this policy serves as a means to do that. Additionally, the Session believes making a policy for child protection to be necessary at this time because of recent high-profile cases in Christian churches, denominations, and ministries where instances of abuse have either been covered-up or poorly handled. This has led to public scandal and legal consequences for these organizations, in addition to the resulting blemish on the name of Christ.

Second, it may seem that a fine-toothed policy is unnecessary in a small town such as Kosciusko—where everyone knows one another. However, Scripture is clear that the heart is deceitful above all things. We may know someone our whole lives, but find ourselves shocked when they commit a scandalous sin. In this regard, small towns are no different than large cities. We want to be as innocent as doves and as wise as serpents. Therefore, we want to prevent any opportunity for child abuse; this policy is primarily about prevention and protection. We will give no foothold to the evil one.

2. Are we sure that we aren't taking on more legal responsibility than we need to?

The Session has taken great care in drafting this policy to insure that we are in compliance with the Law and not taking on undue legal responsibilities. To that end, we have received the input of an attorney every step along the way. It is our desire to protect our families and our church without hindering our ability to do ministry.

3. Won't this policy make ministry (e.g., Sunday school) more difficult?

There will certainly be a period of adjustment in many areas of ministry as we implement this policy. However, as we get into the habit of doing ministry this way, it will become second nature. Yes, we will need more adults to assist in Sunday school and to participate in ministry. But this is a good thing. The more people we have involved in ministry to our children, the better! Adherence to this policy may even increase the fruitfulness of our children's ministry.

4. Will this restrict our pastors' and staff's ability to minister to children/youth?

No, it is not our intention to restrict our staff's ability to minister to our children and youth. Great care has been taken to this effect in drafting the policy. There is ample room within the bounds of this policy for staff to meet one-on-one with students, do home visits, Bible studies, go hunting, do lunches, take road trips, etc. It simply prevents staff from being alone with a minor in an unsafe way.

5. How will this policy affect PDS?

Our Child Protection Policy will affect Presbyterian Day School and any other organizations (e.g., Boy Scouts, homeschool groups) that use FPC property. However, PDS already conducts screening procedures and complies to safety standards set by the Mississippi

Association of Independent Schools (MAIS). In addition to MAIS standards, PDS will include guidelines in their teacher training process that are comparable to this policy. PDS will also establish its own reporting protocols that filter through PDS administration rather than through FPC's Senior Pastor.

6. How do we plan to implement this policy?

We will introduce the policy to the church family by means of a series of informational meetings. These meetings will focus on informing parents and volunteers of the upcoming changes. We will also begin the process of educating and screening potential volunteers/staff. This will be done via online abuse awareness training, a screening form, and an educational interview session. There will be a period of adjustment as responsibilities are distributed to ministry supervisors and volunteers, but eventually the method of ministry set forth in the policy will become natural.

7. Who is expected to follow the Child Protection Policy?

The Child Protection Policy applies to *all persons, whether staff, officers, volunteers, members, visitors, and/or guests*, (Section 2, par. 4). Any organization, individual, club, or professional who uses FPC facilities is expected to abide by it.

8. Can a husband and wife serve together?

Absolutely. In most cases, and especially in Sunday school, a husband and wife team satisfies our Principle of Visibility. There are some situations, such as all-night events, where it may be wise to have a non-relative as the second adult. Multiple adults usually chaperone such events.

9. Can teenagers engage in ministry to children in this policy?

Having another responsible person in the classroom is always preferable to being alone with a group of children. If a teenage volunteer fits that bill, then fantastic! We want our youth to be involved in the ministries of the church, especially with the younger children of the church. However, teenagers are not allowed to be responsible for children without adult supervision unless they are certified babysitters. Thus, if the adult volunteer or staff person becomes ill or must leave the room to take care of something, we may be left with an unsafe situation.

10. How old does a teenager need to be to volunteer in children's ministry?

It really depends on the maturity of the teenager. Some teenagers mature earlier than others and are capable of taking care of children as young as 12 or 13 years of age. In broad terms, junior high kids may assist with early elementary classes, senior high kids may assist with junior high classes, and college students may assist with high school classes.

First Presbyterian Church CHILD PROTECTION POLICY SCREENING PROCESS

An Overview of the Screening & Training Process

While all that is required to be a member of First Presbyterian Church is a *credible profession of faith*, this profession alone does not equal qualification for teaching ministry or childcare ministry. For this reason, when a person comes on staff at First Presbyterian Church or desires to volunteer in a ministry involving minors, our Session requires him to go through a screening and training process as described in the Child Protection Policy. There are three essential components of this process.

Formal Screening: All potential staff and children's volunteers are required to fill out two forms. These are a *Statement of Understanding and Agreement* and the *Criminal Background Check Authorization*. An additional form is required for ministry staff and those who will be in a position of regular authority over and/or interaction with children (this is the *Primary Screening Form*). Upon completion, these forms are to be turned in to the church secretary. In the interest of confidentiality, the forms may be submitted in a sealed manila envelope. The church secretary will pass the forms to the Senior Pastor, who will review them and may pass them to the pastor or elder who will conduct the volunteer's interview. *These forms will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored in a secured location.*

Personal Interview: Not all those who serve in children's ministry will require an interview, such as nursery volunteers and VBS volunteers. However, all those who are volunteering for regular service in our children's and youth ministries will need one. This interview is a private session with one of the pastors, the ministry supervisor, or an active ruling elder, to discuss the potential ministry and the Child Protection Policy. For those who are required to fill out the *Primary Screening Form*, this interview will serve as a review of that form. The interviewer or the potential volunteer may request the presence of an additional pastor or elder during this session.

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training: Lastly, *all* volunteers and staff are required to go through *Ministry Safe's* "Sexual Abuse Awareness Training." This training is to be done online and takes approximately one hour to complete, with a 25 question quiz that follows the training videos. You may request a link for this training through the church office. If you do not have reliable internet access at home, you may schedule a time to go through the training in the FPC office. Once you complete the training you will receive a certificate of completion and the church office will be notified. This part of the training process may be done at any time. All that is required is a valid email address.

Description of Forms:

- **Statement of Understanding and Agreement:** All volunteers and staff who work with minors must know the requirements of the Child Protection Policy, and have a basic idea of what to do if an incident were to occur. To that end, we require that staff and volunteers read the current version of the Child Protection Policy and sign a form to that effect. We also strongly encourage officers and parents to read the policy and sign this form.
- **Primary Screening Form:** This form is to be used with all staff and persons who desire to work *regularly* with minors. Think of it as an application for ministry to minors. These forms will be filled out and discussed with a member of the pastoral staff and/or a member of the

Session. Upon completion, forms will be kept strictly confidential and stored in a secured location.

- **Criminal Background Check Authorization:** All staff and volunteers who work with minors in any capacity are required to submit to a criminal background check. Upon completion, these forms and their results will be kept strictly confidential and stored in a secure location.

First Presbyterian Church
STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING & AGREEMENT

I have received a copy of the Child Protection Policy (version _____), and have read it in its entirety.

I understand the policies and procedures outlined and enumerated in First Presbyterian Church's Child Protection Policy. I agree to fully comply with and follow the Child Protection Policy.

Signature _____

Date _____

Print Name _____

**First Presbyterian Church
PRIMARY SCREENING FORM**

CONFIDENTIAL

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (voluntary or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. This is not an employment application. It is being used to assist the church in providing a safe environment for children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. We do not discriminate based on appearance, race, age, or gender. However, we will consider religious beliefs, personal holiness, and criminal background in staffing voluntary and compensated positions. All information provided will be kept confidential.

Date _____

Name _____
Last First Middle

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Telephone _____

Marital Status: _____ (Single, Married, Divorced, etc.)

Ministry Information

Name of church where you are a member _____

How long have you been a member? _____

Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Yes _____ No _____

When did you begin attending FPC regularly? _____

List the name, address, city and state of all other churches you have attended regularly during the past ten years (include addresses). Use the back of this form if necessary.

List *all previous work* involving youth or children. Include organization’s name, type of work performed, and dates, along with a **contact person** familiar with your work. *Use the back of this form if necessary.*

List any training, education or other experiences that have prepared you for ministry to youth or children.

Personal References

May not be relatives or former employers unless pertinent to this application

Name _____

Name _____

Address _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Telephone _____

Confidential Background Information

Because First Presbyterian Church cares for our members and our children, and desires to protect them, please answer the following questions. We understand that the answers to these questions may be private and deeply personal, and we will protect your privacy. The only people who will have access to this form is the senior pastor, the FPC staff member directly responsible for the ministry area you seek to serve in, and to the Session upon formal request.

Why do you want to work with children or youth at First Presbyterian Church?

Do you have a preference concerning the age group or sex of children or students with whom you would like to work? Why?

What is your philosophy concerning the re-direction or discipline of children in a ministry or classroom setting?

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime other than a minor traffic violation?

Yes _____ No _____

If “yes” please explain (attach a separate page as necessary):

Have you ever been legally accused in civil or criminal court, had charges filed against you, and/or been convicted of physical or sexual abuse?

Yes _____ No _____

If “yes” please explain (attach a separate page as necessary):

Have you ever been treated for or had a problem with drug and/or alcohol addiction or abuse (including prescription medications)?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please explain:

Do you have any medical, physical or emotional conditions which may impact your ability to work with children?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please explain (if pertinent, please identify any related medications):

Do you consider yourself to have been physically or sexually abused as a child?*

**If you prefer, you may leave this question blank and discuss with the Senior Pastor. Answering "yes" does not preclude the opportunity to work with children or youth.*

If you were physically or sexually abused as a child, would you consider utilizing church resources to seek healing in this area of your life?

Have you ever physically or sexually abused a child?

Yes _____ No _____

If "yes" please explain (attach a separate page as necessary):

Has anyone ever accused you of physically or sexually abusing a child outside of a court of law?

Yes _____ No _____

If "yes" please explain (attach a separate page as necessary):

Feel free to use the below space to answer above questions. Please indicate which question you are answering/continuing for easy reference.

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT AND RELEASE

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the PCA Book of Church Order and the Child Protection Policy of First Presbyterian Church and subject to the authority of its Session, and to refrain from unbiblical conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, former employers or churches listed in this application, and anyone identified by such references, former employers or churches to provide First Presbyterian Church any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work.

In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by First Presbyterian Church, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or my family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

I clearly release any church or reference supplied by me in this application from any damages to me, my family or heirs, because of any oral or written communications supplied to First Presbyterian Church as a result of my application.

I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING APPLICANT'S STATEMENT AND RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS STATEMENT AND RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Print Name _____

Parent's Signature (if applicant is under age 18) _____

Date _____

REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK AND AUTHORIZATION

I hereby request any Police Department or government agency to release any information to First Presbyterian Church of Kosciusko, Mississippi which pertains to any record of convictions contained in its files or in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state, or national. I hereby release said Police Department or agency from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Signature _____ Print Name _____

Parent's Signature (if applicant is under age 18) _____

Maiden name, if applicable _____

Print all aliases _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____

Social Security Number _____ Today's Date _____

Current Address _____

How many years have you lived at this address? _____

List all previous addresses at which you have lived in the last five years, together with dates:
If you have lived at the prior address for at least the past five years, include only your last prior address.

Do you have a current driver's license? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, list # _____

Please attach a copy of your current driver's license

First Presbyterian Church INCIDENT REPORT FORM

First Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with the Child Protection Policy and state law. This form is to be used anytime an incident occurs during FPC ministry events, whether on-site or off-site, as well as to provide a written record of inappropriate behavior towards minors (e.g., grooming), policy violations, suspected abuse, or allegations of abuse. In the case of a potentially serious incident, it is highly encouraged that two eyewitnesses fill out an Incident Report.

Name: _____ Phone No. _____

Date and Time of Incident: _____

Location of Incident: _____

Name of Minor(s) Involved: _____

What was your involvement in the incident, if any? _____

Who was the adult in charge at the time of the incident? _____

Description of Incident: (use back of form if more space is needed)

Was there injury? Yes ___ No ___

If so, describe the nature of the injury:

What action was taken, and by whom?

Other witnesses to the incident:

How and when was the parent/guardian contacted? _____

Please indicate which of the following individuals you notified of the incident, their name, and the date and time at which you notified them:

Pastor:

Ministry Supervisor:

Elder:

Church Secretary:

Deacon:

Signature of Witness/Reporter

Date

Signature of Person Receiving Report

Date

Signature of Active Session Member

Date

(Extra Space for Incident Description and Additional Comments)