

Protecting

# God's Children



Child Protection Policies  
Peace Presbyterian Church

## SUMMARY

It is the policy of Peace Presbyterian Church that everyone is to maintain the strongest sense of integrity, safety, nurturing, and care involving all interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, including all church members, church officers, nonmember employees and/or contractors, and volunteers.

## RATIONALE

The Book of Order states, “The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life,” and Presbyterians believe this baptismal commitment to be a serious one, understanding it to apply to all in the church’s care, including children, youth, and vulnerable adults (Book of Order W-2.3013).

**We believe** children, youth, and vulnerable adults are a gift from God and the Church has a divine mandate to provide for their safety and nurturing. The Church is called to be a place that reflects the open arms of Jesus; a place of safety and nurture.

**We believe** any type of abuse involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults has lasting and devastating effects on the life of the victim/survivor. It is the call of the Church to be a life-giving entity of Christ’s healing and hope for community and individuals, not an entity that brings harm and hurt.

**We believe** the larger Church suffers with the victim/survivor and his or her family when abuse and neglect occurs. The Church is crippled by the hurt, pain, and distrust that accompanies abuse. Not only does the Church lose its credibility at all levels, it also suffers considerable financial loss and loss of integrity. More importantly, in instances of child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse within the Church, there is immeasurable spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical harm perpetrated that woefully cripples God’s call on the Church.

**We believe** children and youth are not only persons of care and service in the church, but they are also co-recipients of the graces and love of God. The Church, as the body of Christ, is to be the presence of Christ’s love; providing for them a safe, thriving, and nurturing environment in which to grow in every way.

## MINISTRY POLICIES

All Peace Presbyterian Church activities, regardless of location, involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults, will be subject to the following policies:

- **Screening** – No person will be a teacher or leader of activities with children, youth, or vulnerable adults unless and until they have completed the Screening Process (see below).
- **Eligibility** – Ordinarily, no person will be a teacher or leader of activities with children, youth, or vulnerable adults until such person has been an active participant in the life of the church for at least six months.
- **Adult to Minor Ratio** – Children and youth activities will be supervised with a minimum adult to minor ratio of 1 to 10.
- **Adult Supervision** – As often as practical, two adults will be assigned to supervise or lead all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults (with the exception of regularly scheduled Sunday morning activities). While we realize that this will not always be possible, it is our goal. When transporting youth to/from offsite activities in private vehicles, we do not require two adults be present in the car. However, we should always avoid a situation where there is one youth volunteer/staff member and one youth in a vehicle.
- **Age Limits** – Ordinarily, anyone in a supervisory role will be over 18 years of age and at least 4 years older than the oldest participant.
- **Activities Outside Greater Greenville** – Activities that take place outside of the greater Greenville area must be supervised by a minimum of two adults.
- **Overnight Lodging Supervision** – Any children or youth activities that involve overnight lodging must be supervised by a minimum of two adults having each participating gender represented. For example, if an overnight activity includes both boys and girls, there must be at least one male and one female supervisor.
- **Separate Sleeping Arrangements** – Separate sleeping arrangements must be provided for each gender. Whenever possible, adults should not share sleeping quarters with children or youth.
- **Classroom Door Windows** – Windows in rooms where children or youth activities are conducted should be unobstructed so that observers can view the activity.
- **Prohibited Behaviors** – All members, volunteers and employees should abide by a code of conduct that honors our list of ***Prohibited Behaviors*** (see section below).
- **Reporting Violations** – Any violation of the policy shall be reported in accordance with the section titled ***Reporting Violations*** below.
- **Firearms** – Use or possession of firearms is prohibited.

## PROHIBITED BEHAVIORS

The following acts are prohibited by this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any Peace Presbyterian Church activity or program.

### Prohibited behaviors include but are not restricted to:

- Display of sexual affection toward a child, youth or vulnerable adult.
- Use of profanity or off-color jokes.
- Discussion of sexual encounters with or around children or youth or in any way involving children or youth in personal problems or issues.
- Any kind of verbal remarks with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendo directed at or about a minor.
- Dating or becoming “romantically” involved with children (under the age of eighteen).
- Possession of or being under the influence of any illegal substances or misuse of a legal drug.
- Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a minors’ function of the church.
- Possessing sexually oriented materials—including printed or online pornography—on church property or property being utilized for a church event.
- Having secrets with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Staring at or commenting on children’s bodies.
- Engaging in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with children.
- Working one-on-one with children in a private setting.
- Abusing children, youth or vulnerable adults in anyway, including:
  - **Physical abuse:** hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restraint.
  - **Verbal abuse:** degrade, threaten, or curse.
  - **Sexual abuse:** inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually oriented conversations.
  - **Mental abuse:** shame, humiliate, act cruelly.
  - **Neglect:** withhold food, water, shelter.
  - **Permit children or youth to engage in the following:** hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, ridicule, humiliation, or sexual activity.

## REPORTING VIOLATIONS

Everyone at Peace has a responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation thought to be in violation of this Policy.

In the event that anyone personally witnesses an occurrence in violation of this policy, that person should:

- Secure the safety of the child, children, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- Report the incident immediately to one of the following designated persons:
  - Pastor/Head of Staff
  - Clerk of Session
  - Elder on Session
  - Staff Person
- Do not leave the child, children, youth or vulnerable adult alone to report the incident.
- Avoid confronting the alleged or accused violator of the policy.
- Allow the designated person to provide you with instructions for reporting the incident to parents or guardian.
- Remember that the moderator of session or the designated person from a session task-force will be solely responsible for all communications on behalf of the church.

In the event a child, youth, or vulnerable adult reports abusive conduct while engaged in a church sponsored activity or involving the staff, employees, members, teachers, parents or volunteers of Peace Presbyterian Church, the person initially contacted by the child should contact one of the designated persons and complete an **Incident Report** (available on our website or in the office). Record verbatim in the Incident Report, the specific words first spoken by the child, youth or vulnerable adult and the conduct and demeanor observed concerning the incident.

## NORTH CAROLINA LAW TO REPORT ABUSE

*§ 7B-301. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment.*

*(a) Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be*

*made orally, by telephone, or in writing. The report shall include information as is known to the person making it including the name and address of the juvenile; the name and address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or caretaker; the age of the juvenile; the names and ages of other juveniles in the home; the present whereabouts of the juvenile if not at the home address; the nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse, neglect, or dependency; and any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the need for protective services or court intervention. If the report is made orally or by telephone, the person making the report shall give the person's name, address, and telephone number. Refusal of the person making the report to give a name shall not preclude the department's assessment of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of maltreatment.*

*(b) Any person or institution who knowingly or wantonly fails to report the case of a juvenile as required by subsection (a) of this section, or who knowingly or wantonly prevents another person from making a report as required by subsection (a) of this section, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.*

## **CONSEQUENCES**

Any person accused of committing a Prohibited Act, whether a staff member, employee, member, volunteer, youth or child may be subject to immediate suspension from participation in all children and youth activities and programs of Peace Presbyterian Church. Such suspension shall continue during any investigation by the church or law enforcement or child protection agencies.

Any person found to have committed a Prohibited Act shall be prohibited from future participation in all children and youth activities and programs of Peace Presbyterian Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment.

As required by North Carolina law and the Book of Order (G-6.0304B), all reports of abuse will be forwarded in a timely manner to the appropriate child protection and law enforcement authorities. Such reporting must be accomplished in addition to complying with this Child Protection Policy.

Failure to timely report a Prohibited Act to one of the designated persons shall be considered a procedural violation of this Child Protection policy and shall be grounds for

termination of employment of a staff member or employee and probable suspension and dismissal from participation in all children and youth activities and programs of Peace Presbyterian Church by any person.

## SCREENING PROCEDURES

While this process understandably intrudes into the privacy of our lives, the security of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults outweighs the personal invasion inherent with such investigation and disclosures. All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the results of all security background and reference checks or the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of such disclosure requirements will be considered confidential.

All employees and volunteers who work with children, youth or vulnerable adults must:

- Complete and sign the **Volunteer Questionnaire** (available in the office or online); once every three years.
- Consent to a criminal background check; once every two years.
- Sign a form acknowledging that they have read the contents of this Child Protection Policy and that they agree to abide by it.
- Submit to a check against the North Carolina Sex Offender Registry.  
<http://sexoffender.ncdoj.gov>

## TRAINING

Training will be offered twice a year at times to maximize participation. All employees and volunteers who work with children, youth or vulnerable adults must participate in training before beginning their volunteer service. The training shall cover this Child Protection Policy thoroughly as well as methods of abuse prevention and a detailed plan of reporting. These trainings shall further cover:

- What constitutes child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse and neglect.
- How to recognize signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect.
- State laws concerning definitions of abuse and reporting.
- Mandatory criminal background checks and the security of those files.
- Explanation of the importance of the application and screening processes.
- Appropriate boundaries with children and youth, especially regarding adult/child/youth ratios, transportation, and use of technology.

## DEFINITIONS

**Child** – A child is defined as a person between the ages of 0 and 11.

**Youth** – A youth is defined as a person between the ages of 12 and 17.

**Minor** – A minor is defined as a person under the age of 18.

**Vulnerable Adult** – Any person eighteen-years old or older without the developmental or cognitive capacity to consent.

**Child/Youth Worker** – Any person, volunteer or paid staff or contractor, who participates at any level at church sponsored events or activities involving children and/or youth.

**Vulnerable Adult Abuse:** Any act or failure to act that results in the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult.

**Child/Youth Abuse:** Any act or failure to act that results in the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, neglect, or exploitation of a child or youth.

**Sexual Abuse:** In the *Book of Order*, sexual abuse is defined as, “Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position” (*Book of Order*, D-10.0401c).



*Peace Presbyterian Church*

301 Guinness Drive ▪ Winterville, North Carolina 28590-9943  
(252) 355-2273 ▪ [www.peacepresbyterian.org](http://www.peacepresbyterian.org)