

# **Safe Sanctuary Policy**

## **First Presbyterian Church**

**302 N. Dunton Avenue  
Arlington Heights, Illinois  
847-255-5900  
firstpresah.org**

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## **Preamble**

Because we affirm that  
All children are a gift of God,  
Created by God and created good;  
All children are a gift  
To the whole of the human community;  
All children have a real faith  
And gifts for ministry;  
All children have the right to be children.

Therefore  
We hope for a world  
Where all children can find a safe place;  
Where all ages, races, genders, creeds, and abilities  
Are recognized, valued, and celebrated;  
Where all adults hear the voices of children and  
Speak with, as well as for them.

[We must remember that]  
Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to  
Welcome them in his name;  
Jesus lifted up a child as an example of  
What the Realm of God is like.

*From the opening preamble of “A Vision For Children And The Church”  
by Congregational Ministries Division. Adopted by 205th General Assembly of PC (USA)*

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY.....</b>	<b>1-2</b>
<b>III. SCOPE OF POLICY–APPLICABILITY AND REQUIREMENTS.....</b>	<b>3-5</b>
Applicability .....	3
Church Employees and Volunteers .....	4
Outside Organizations.....	4
Policy Requirements .....	5
<b>IV. ACHIEVMENT OF RISK REDUCTION.....</b>	<b>5-10</b>
Screening.....	5
Supervision .....	6-8
Two-Adult Policy.....	6
Ratio of Adults to Children Policy.....	7
Classroom Doors Policy .....	7
Bathroom Policy .....	8
Training.....	8-10
Adults.....	8
Children and Youth.....	9
Adult Leadership Form .....	9
Code of Conduct .....	9
<b>V. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS.....</b>	<b>10-15</b>
Immediate Safety.....	11
Immediate Verbal Report .....	11
Appropriate Entity to Conduct Investigation .....	11
Concerns Regarding Conduct Not Clearly Abuse.....	12
Report to Child Abuse Hotline.....	13
Mandated Reporters .....	13
Incident Report Form .....	13
Alleged Offender Suspended Immediately, As Necessary .....	13
Media Inquiries.....	14
Pastoral Care.....	14
Confidentiality – Identities of Involved Persons Not Disclosed .....	14
Addressing Known Offenders Who Are Members .....	15

**VI. SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY FORMS .....16**

## I. INTRODUCTION

First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights, Illinois (hereafter "**the Church**") has always stressed the sanctity of human life and the importance and worth of each individual as a child of God. This policy articulates policies and procedures to help make the Church a safer place for children, youth, and adults, especially those who may be vulnerable. Unless otherwise specified, "**child**" in this policy means any person age 18 years and younger.

## II. GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY

**Abuse/Child Abuse** – Any conduct that harms or has a potential to harm a child physically, sexually, or emotionally through inappropriate aggression, sexual contact, verbal harassment, or negligence. It includes, but is not limited to non-accidental physical injury, sexual contact or exploitation, neglect, emotional distress, and spiritual abuse, directed to a child.

**Emotional Abuse** - Chronic and persistent acts by an adult that endanger the mental health or emotional development of a child including rejections, ignoring, terrorizing, corrupting, constant criticism, mean remarks, insults and giving little or no love, guidance and support.

**Physical Abuse** - An injury or pattern of injuries that happen to a child that are not accidental. These injuries may include beatings, burns, bruises, bites, welts, strangulation, broken bones or death.

**Sexual Abuse** - Sexual abuse is sexual assault or exploitation. Sexual abuse may consist of numerous acts over a long period of time or a single incident.

**Sexual Harassment** - The making of unwelcome or offensive sexual advances or the making of sexually offensive remarks or acts in any medium, especially by a person who is in a supervisory or care-giving position.

**Sexual Misconduct** - Conduct that results in or has the potential to result in child sexual abuse.

**Sexual Molestation** - Abuse against a child that is sexual in nature. The behavior may or may not involve touching. It also includes, but is not limited to exhibitionism, voyeurism, display of pornographic material, and attempts to photograph or record for purposes of pornography. Sexual contact or interaction between an adult and a child is always considered forced or abusive.

**Neglect** - The failure of a parent or responsible caregiver to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter, medical care or other basic needs to a child.

**Spiritual Abuse** - Using religious references to shame or by guilt to motivate a child into a particular action or behavior.

**Accused/Alleged Offender** - Person against whom an accusation of abuse or neglect is made.

**Best Practices and Operating Procedures** – The handbook, maintained by the Safe Sanctuary Review and Implementation Committee, providing practical guidance for working with children and youth.

**Caregiver** – Any individual, staff or volunteer, who provides care or supervision for children.

**Child or Youth** – For purposes of this policy, persons up to and including 18 years of age. This term shall also include legally incompetent persons.

**Church Sponsored Activity** – Includes any and all gatherings that arise from Church generated worship, education, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission or recreational events. These events include on-campus and off-campus gatherings.

**Head of Staff** – The Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights

**Legally Incompetent Person** - A person who is not able to manage his/her affairs due to mental deficiency, illness or sometimes physical disability.

**Mandated Reporter** - A person required by law to report to Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect that come to their attention. In addition to state defined “mandated reporters,” Clergy, Certified Christian Educators, Elders, and Deacons are required by the *Book of Order* to report knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities (*Book of Order*, Sections G-4.0302; G-2.0102).

Regardless of whether an individual is a mandated reporter under the law, all staff and volunteers of the Church are responsible for informing the Head of Staff, an Associate Pastor, the Senior Administrative Assistant, or the person in charge of the designated event of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect and to ensure that DCFS is informed, as appropriate. If the incident takes place in a state other than Illinois, the Child and Family Services agency in that state will be informed as required by law.

**Response** - The action taken when a report of sexual misconduct or abuse is received. It may include inquiry into facts and circumstances, or possible disciplinary action.

**Staff** - Any person who is employed by or contracted with the Church, whether paid or volunteer, full-time or part-time.

- **Employee** - Any person who works for salary or wages at First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights (the Church)
- **Volunteer** - Any unpaid person who performs a service for a Church sponsored activity
- **Leader** - An adult member designated by the sponsoring organization, with responsibility for children and/or youth. The adult must be a minimum of 18 years of age and at least four years older than the oldest child or youth they supervise. Leaders of overnight trips must be at least 21 years of age. *Note: Persons age 18-21 are acceptable to act as an overnight chaperone if there are other older adult chaperones.*

**The Safe Sanctuary Committee** – A Committee made up of the Youth Ministries Chair, Children’s Ministries Chair, Personnel Committee Chair, and the staff member(s) overseeing Children’s and Youth Ministries shall oversee the policy’s implementation, monitor compliance, recommend policy changes and clarifications, provide frontline evaluation of concerns, make recommendations to the appropriate decision-making persons/entities, and provide routine training. This committee will meet once a year and as needed to fulfill these duties.

### III. SCOPE OF POLICY

#### APPLICABILITY

This policy supersedes all prior First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights Safe Sanctuary Policy statements.

In this Policy

- **SHALL** signifies practice that is mandated,
- **SHOULD** signifies practice that is strongly recommended,
- **IS APPROPRIATE** signifies practice that is commended as suitable,
- **BEST PRACTICES GUIDE** signifies a guide for recommended procedures related to the Policy.

All employees of the Church are governed by this policy as incorporated by the Personnel Manual's reference to "Safe Sanctuary Policy." With regard to any employee(s) of the Church, perceived conflicts or ambiguities in application of this policy shall be resolved by the Personnel Committee and Head of Staff.

Generally, the Church does not directly control independent contractors. However, all independent contractors who work with the Church children and youth are governed by this policy.

All volunteers of the Church who work with children and youth are governed by this policy.

**The goal of this policy is to lower the risk of abuse and sexual misconduct for the following individuals and groups:**

- **Children**  
This is the key and over-arching priority of any risk reduction program. Children are a precious resource in the Church, and we have a mandate to see to their safety and nurture. **Risk reduction means child protection.**
- **Families**  
Families must be assured that their children remain safe and secure while participating in Church programs. **Risk reduction means family protection.**
- **Church Workers**  
An effective risk reduction program protects Church workers--both staff and volunteers--from personal harm. Effective risk reduction efforts ensure that workers are not open to unfounded accusations or compromising circumstances. **Risk reduction means volunteer/worker protection.**
- **Church Leaders**  
Church leaders may be liable for damages resulting from negligence. Efforts at protection must be in place. **Risk reduction means leadership protection.**
- **Church Community**  
A local Church suffers intensely after a case of abuse or sexual misconduct occurs. Financial, legal, and interpersonal stresses are unleashed. To take steps to protect the vitality, effectiveness, mission and reputation of the Church community is essential. **Risk reduction means congregational protection.**

## **Church Employees and Volunteers**

This policy applies to persons including Church employees and volunteers participating in all children and youth programs of the Church, including but not limited to:

- All Paid Church Staff
- Church Officers (Elders, Deacons, Trustees)
- Participants in any overnight activity
- Sunday School Teachers, Shepherds
- Confirmation Mentors
- Worship Care
- Children and Youth Fellowship Programs
- Weekday Children's Programs
- Children and Youth Choirs
- Nursery and Childcare
- Church Sponsored Retreats, Missions Trips, etc.
- Vacation Bible School (VBS)
- Church Sponsored Athletic Teams
- Parents Day Out (PDO)
- Kids Stay and Play
- Boy Scouts, Willow House, and other outside organizations
- Outreach, Community Service, etc.

## **Outside Organizations Using Church Facilities**

All leaders of non-Church sponsored groups and events using the Church facilities, which have direct supervision of children and youth, are expected to adhere to these policies. This includes but is not limited to groups such as Boy Scouts and Willow House.

Upon receipt of the policy from the Church, the leaders must review the Safe Sanctuary Policy, acknowledge their receipt of it and confirm their agreement to follow the policy by signing the Outside Organization Leaders Release Form. Leaders of outside organizations will be invited to attend the Church's frequently scheduled training classes and are expected to conduct their own due diligence in this regard.

If the organization has its own policy, the leader of the outside organization is responsible for training its volunteers so long as the organization is governed by child abuse/sexual misconduct policies and procedures that are at least as restrictive as those governing the programs of the Church.

Given the nature of the outside groups that use the Church facilities, the Church will not perform background checks, seek personal and professional references, review employment records, or obtain civil and criminal records for such groups. Leaders of outside organizations are required to inform the Church of any allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct.



## POLICY REQUIREMENTS

- All employees and volunteers shall abide by the Code of Conduct, as outlined on page 9.
- Each person must assume responsibility for his/her own actions in working with children and youth and for attending required Safe Sanctuary Policy training.
- An individual may be terminated from employment and/or volunteer services for failure to observe and abide by this policy. This action may be taken regardless of the outcome of any investigation if the Head of Staff, Personnel Committee, Children's Ministries Committee or Youth Ministries Committee determines the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Best Practices Guide have not been followed.

## **IV. ACHIEVEMENT OF RISK REDUCTION GOAL**

The goal of risk reduction will be achieved through enunciating policies and procedures to Employees and Volunteers in the areas of **Screening, Supervision, Training, Reporting and Responding to Allegations**.

Each of these areas will be explained in the following pages.

### SCREENING

Any person who serves on behalf of the Church who may come into contact with a child shall be subject to screening **before** being selected to perform the services. Any such person – staff or volunteer, full time or part time, as well as Church Officers (Elders, Deacons, and Trustees) – is subject to this requirement. (*Refer to **Church Employees and Volunteers**, page 4 for more specifics.*)

All volunteers working with children shall be screened and must have been a member of the Church for at least six months. Any exceptions must be approved by the Children's Ministries and/or Youth Ministries Committees for each specific volunteer opportunity. No exceptions will be granted for overnight situations.

All information gathered in the screening process shall be kept in a secure location and shall be kept strictly confidential.

1. Interviews, application forms, personal and professional references, employment records, background checks are required for **all employees**. Background checks will be done on Church **volunteers**. Information gained by these means will be used to determine eligibility to work with children and youth.
2. Interviews, reference checks, employment records, and background checks are to be documented in writing, and become confidential Church property. The Senior Administrative Assistant and the Safe Sanctuary Steering Committee will oversee the storage of the records, files, and background checks to guarantee that this information is housed in a secure location and that access to the files is limited and monitored to ensure that the confidentiality of all records is upheld.

3. An individual's records will not be released to any party except with the written approval of the Head of Staff. An individual's records will be made available to the employee or volunteer, but not a candidate for employment, if a written request is made to the Head of Staff.
4. In addition, all current and potential employees and volunteers will be required to sign the Background Screening Consent and Church Activity Form at the beginning of their service and again every six years when background checks are renewed. Each fall, all employees of the Church and all volunteers who work with youth and children, as well as Elders, Deacons, and Trustees will be required to review the current Safe Sanctuary Policy and sign a Recommitment Form.
5. For Employees – Any candidate for employment who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect cannot be employed by the Church without the express written approval of the Personnel Committee, including the Head of Staff. The Personnel Committee, including the Head of Staff, will consider the available information related to the circumstance of the situation in order to make a determination about the employment of the individual in question. Active substance abuse or a conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from employment with children or youth: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, sodomy or abuse of a minor.
6. For Volunteers – Any candidate for volunteer service who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect cannot work with children and youth at the Church. Active substance abuse or a conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from volunteer service with children and youth: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, sodomy, or abuse of a minor. The Safe Sanctuary Steering Committee will inform any volunteer applicant denied the opportunity to serve with children and youth the reason(s) for disqualification and how to access information relevant to the decision.

## **SUPERVISION**

### **Two-Adult Policy**

At least two volunteers\* will supervise all Church sponsored programs and activities involving children and youth whether on or off campus. In the alternative, all activities must occur in a public place. Adults must remain in sight of one another at all times except in emergency situations. Since spouses cannot be compelled to testify against one another in a court of law, husbands and wives, and partners in a civil union count as one adult. Adults in leadership roles are expected to avoid situations where they are alone with children and youth by having leadership teams of at least two adults for all activities. The presence of two or more adults prevents awkward circumstances where child abuse could occur or be alleged, allows shared leadership, and facilitates appropriate discipline. This two-adult policy extends to all overnight and off campus-related events. Under no circumstances can one adult alone take or accompany children or youth on an overnight outing.

*\*A change to the policy enacted by Session in October, 2022 allows one of the two volunteers to be 16 years old or older. They must not be two members of the same family.*

Adults are to avoid being in a one-child, one-adult situation. With respect to transportation to an event occurring off the grounds of the Church, the requirement of two (2) responsible caregivers may be waived during transportation. However, there shall be a minimum of two (2) children in each vehicle at all times, and the parent (or a responsible caregiver designated by the parent) shall have responsibility to drop off and pick up the child at the Church or a designated meeting point.

All adults who transport non-related children/youth within the scope of a church program are required to complete the Children/Youth Transportation form. Drivers must be in compliance with the current requirements of the Church's insurance carrier (*see Best Practices Guide for specifics*).

When one-on-one interactions between children and youth and employee/volunteers are necessary (e.g., in emergency situations or occasions of pastoral care), care must be taken to conduct the meeting in an environment that provides visibility by others adults. Another adult must have knowledge of the employee/volunteer's whereabouts and the child with whom they are meeting.

In any situation where it is necessary for an adult to be alone with a child (i.e. emergency situations and pastoral care situations), the adult should notify another adult before and after the period during which he/she is alone with the child and the anticipated time period must be specified.

### **Ratios of Adults to Children Policy**

In addition to the requirements stated in the **"Two Adult Rule"** all efforts should be made to comply with the following adults to children ratios for all programs and events sponsored by the Church.

- 0 to 12 months .....1 adult to 3 children
- 13 to 23 months .....1 adult to 5 children
- 2 and 3 years .....1 adult to 6 children
- 4 and 5 years .....1 adult to 8 children
- 6 years and older.....1 adult to 10 children

For overnight events such as lock-ins or retreats sponsored by the Church, all efforts should be made to comply with the following adult to children ratios (gender balance is required):

- Middle School students .....1 adult to 6 children
- High School students .....1 adult to 7 children

In addition, a child shall be in at least sixth grade before being permitted to participate in any overnight event unless a family member or legal guardian, or a responsible adult designated by a parent of the child, is present.

### **Classroom Doors Policy**

Any classroom in which children are participating in events within the Church shall have a portion of the door or area adjacent to the door made of transparent, unimpeded glass. There must be a clear line of vision into the classroom. Where a classroom has a Dutch door without a window, the top half of the door shall remain open.

## **Bathroom Policy – Infants through 4<sup>th</sup> Grade**

- Church employees and volunteers will always use proper supervision when children are using public bathrooms to ensure their safety.
- Church employees and volunteers will call on leaders who may be “floating” from room to room to assist with restroom supervision in order to maintain the two-adult rule.
- Church employees and volunteers will make sure no adults are occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities.
- Children will be sent in pairs, and whenever possible, with the Church employees and volunteers. Church employees and volunteers will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom in visual sight of another adult. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for Church employees and volunteers (i.e., not being alone with a child).
- If Church employees and volunteers are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.

## **TRAINING**

### **Adults**

All employees, all Church officers, and any volunteers who work with children and youth, are required to attend a training session and sign the relevant documents regarding child and youth protection. The Church will offer regular training opportunities. This training will include the following:

- The need for the Safe Sanctuary Policy
- Definition of Child Abuse
- Preconditions for child sexual abuse to occur
- Definition of inappropriate conduct
- Church policies governing working with children and youth
- Two Adult Policy
- Open Door Policy
- Bathroom Policy
- Procedures for reporting allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protection issues
- Procedures for responding to allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protections issues
- Supervising and chaperoning children and/or youth

Following successful completion of the above training and approval of their application, employees and volunteers may be deemed eligible to work with children and youth at the Church. This eligibility must be renewed by:

- Recommitment Form to be submitted annually, each fall
- Training session must be attended every three years
- Background check will be renewed every six years

## **Children and Youth**

Parents bear the primary responsibility for teaching their children about child and youth protection and safety issues. Nonetheless, from time to time, the Church may offer age-appropriate educational opportunities for children and youth to provide them with necessary information about child and youth protection issues, including their right to be free from unwelcome and inappropriate touching or remarks, how to report their concerns, and Church policies regarding their safety. Parents will be advised prior to any such educational sessions.

## **Adult Leadership**

All departments that engage in ministries with children and/or youth are required to verify that each adult leading the event is in compliance with training, background checks, and transportation requirements if needed, before the event occurs.

## **Code of Conduct**

- Church employees and volunteers will not verbally, emotionally physically or sexually abuse children.
- Church employees and volunteers will not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
- Church employees and volunteers may use physical restraint only in situations necessary to protect the child or others from harm.
- Church employees and volunteers will provide proper supervision and exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment at all times.
- Church employees and volunteers will avoid situations where they are alone with a single child and cannot be observed or monitored by others. As adults supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other adults can see them.
- Church employees and volunteers are expected to observe the Two-Adult, Open Door and Bathroom policies in their interactions with children and youth at all times except in emergency situations.
- Church employees and volunteers will respect the rights of children and youth not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable and their right to say no. Adults will discourage children from touching others in an inappropriate manner.
- Church employees and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to an Associate Pastor, the Head of Staff, or the Directors of Youth or Children's Ministries.
- Church employees and volunteers must release children only to the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized in writing by the parent or guardian.
- Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or being impaired by legally prescribed drugs during Church working hours or Church sponsored programs is prohibited.
- Smoking or use of tobacco is not allowed on Church property and is prohibited during Church programs.
- Profanity, inappropriate language or jokes, and any kind of harassment by church employees or volunteers is prohibited.

- Church employees and volunteers will not share inappropriate details of their personal life or ask children to share inappropriate details through any form of communication (written, verbal or electronic).
- Church employees and adult volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with program participants 18 years of age and under.
- Because gift giving can be a form of “buying” silence or loyalty, gift giving must be done on a group basis and for specific occasions only (i.e. baptism, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Bibles, confirmation and graduation). Church employees and volunteers are not allowed to give gifts to individual children or youth without knowledge and permission of the child’s parents and the Head of Staff.
- Church employees and volunteers are required to read, sign and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and attend training sessions of the subject, as instructed by a supervisor.
- Church employees and volunteers are required to report to the Head of Staff, an Associate Pastor, or the Director of Children’s Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries any circumstances under this policy that affect their ability to work with children and youth.

## **V. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS**

- An immediate verbal report shall be made, as outlined in detail in the section “Immediate Verbal Report”, followed by a written report within 48 hours.
- Mandated reporters are those who have a duty to report suspected abuse or misconduct by Illinois law. Clergy, Certified Christian Educators, Elders, and Deacons are required to report suspected abuse or misconduct by the *Book of Order*.
- The alleged offender shall be suspended immediately from all duties that bring them into close contact with children.
- The identities of involved persons shall not be disclosed except to those professionally involved in the case.
- All media inquiries should be directed to and addressed by the Pastor/Head of Staff, or a designee appointed by the Head of Staff, or if necessary, by the Presbytery.
- All information which results from the reporting process shall be kept in a secure location and held strictly confidential.

Whenever any complaints or allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct or any questionable activity involving children arise during any activity that occurs at the Church or during a Church-sponsored program or event, the following procedures should be invoked immediately. The complaints or allegations shall be taken seriously and handled in a thoughtful, fair, and balanced manner.

### **IMMEDIATE SAFETY**

If there is an immediate danger to any person, the staff or volunteer shall take all necessary steps to insure the person’s safety, including calling police if necessary.

## **IMMEDIATE VERBAL REPORT**

Any staff or volunteer with any knowledge of suspected abuse, sexual misconduct, or questionable activity should verbally report the incident immediately to the Head of Staff. If the Head of Staff is unavailable or is the accused, it is appropriate to report to an Associate Pastor, the Senior Administrative Assistant, or the person in charge of the event (unless such person is accused of the abuse or misconduct). If the initial report is made to an Associate Pastor, the Senior Administrative Assistant, or the person in charge of the event, the person receiving the report shall immediately inform the Head of Staff, unless the accused is the Head of Staff.

If a member of the clergy is suspected of abuse or misconduct, the Stated Clerk or Executive Presbyter of the Chicago Presbytery shall be contacted (Phone: 1-312-488-3015), to provide guidance on how to proceed and to determine which entity, the Presbytery or the Church, should contact Police/Law Enforcement.

Any report of child abuse made by a child about their care by a parent, guardian, youth, adult, or a Church staff member or volunteer, despite how unlikely such report may seem, must be relayed to an Associate Pastor or Director of Children's or Youth Ministries, who will report to the Head of Staff.

The Head of Staff will immediately contact the Church attorney and liability insurance carrier. In consultation with the Church attorney, the following may be appropriate:

- The Head of Staff may notify the parent(s) or legal guardian of the alleged victim;
- The Head of Staff may notify the accused individual;
- The Head of Staff may notify the Police/Law Enforcement if the situation appears to be legitimate and with merit.

All concerns and reporting shall be kept confidential.

Within 48 hours of making a verbal report, a written report shall be made on the Incident Report Form and be given to the staff person responsible for the program involved.

## **APPROPRIATE ENTITY TO CONDUCT INVESTIGATION**

The appropriate entity to conduct an investigation and implement disciplinary measures that may be necessary should be determined by the relationship of the alleged offender to the Church:

1. In cases where an allegation of abuse or sexual misconduct by a member of the clergy is raised, the Stated Clerk or Executive Presbyter of the Chicago Presbytery shall be contacted (Phone: 1-312-488-3015), at which time it will be determined which entity, the Presbytery or the Church, should contact Police/Law Enforcement. Response procedures as outlined by the Safe Boundaries Policy of the Presbytery of Chicago shall take over at this point.
2. If the accused is a non-clergy staff of the Church, whether full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer, the complaint or allegation shall be referred to the Personnel Committee of Session to handle according to the Committee's standard procedures for dealing with performance and disciplinary matters. The Personnel Committee shall keep careful records of its investigative proceedings, including summaries of any interviews conducted, evidence gathered, detailed accounts of its actions, and all relevant correspondence. It shall make sure that due process is observed.

3. If the accused has any other relationship (member or non-member) to the Church, then the complaint or allegation shall be reported to the Clerk of Session or Head of Staff. Without undertaking further inquiry, the Clerk shall then report to the Session that an offense has been alleged without naming the alleged offender or the nature of the alleged offense and request that the Session appoint an Investigating Committee in accordance with the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. At any time during the process, the Investigating Committee may request that the Session refer the case to the Presbytery for original jurisdiction, at which point it becomes the responsibility of the Presbytery to handle the judicial process.

### **CONCERNS REGARDING CONDUCT NOT CLEARLY ABUSE**

From time to time issues arise regarding the conduct of our children, youth and adults at the Church, the Children's and Youth Ministries Programs and the adults involved in Children and Youth Ministry that are not clearly abuse related issues but impinge upon child and youth protection and safety, but may require attention and review. Sometimes patterns and trends of a questionable nature may be noticed. This section provides a means to report such issues other than Child Abuse in a manner that will assure the issues, patterns, or trends are recorded for subsequent review, addressed, and resolved.

Examples of issues reported might include:

- child and youth safety issues, behavior issues, safe swimming conduct, etc., during Children and Youth Ministry activities;
- inappropriate conduct by adults during the Church sponsored activities such as inappropriate language, dress, conduct, safety, leadership, discipline, substance abuse, etc.;
- lack of adherence to the Safe Sanctuary Policy;
- observations of inappropriate class or group conduct or activities during the Church sponsored events for Children and Youth;
- potentially inadequate, inappropriate or unwise leadership of Children and Youth Ministry activities.

Steps to take:

1. All adults, youth, and children are encouraged to report any issue as soon as possible to the responsible adult leadership at the time the issue is observed. It is important to bring issues of safety to the attention of responsible adults as soon as possible. Such notification may be oral.
2. When it is appropriate, anyone who wishes to have a concern addressed is encouraged to bring the issue to the attention of the Safe Sanctuary committee or any member therein, or the chairs of the appropriate age group Ministry committees, either verbally or in writing. All volunteers are encouraged to be responsible in identifying issues and it is desirable that such concerns bear the name of the originator.
3. Specific concerns related to the above should be communicated to the Head of Staff in a timely manner. Any pastor is available to hear concerns from any member or employee of the Church related to protection and safety concerns related to children or youth.



### **REPORT TO CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE**

In addition to the reporting described above, if any of the pastors, the Director of Children's Ministries, Director of Youth Ministries, Nursery Coordinator, or the PDO Director become aware of any suspected abuse or sexual misconduct or any questionable activity involving children, either directly or through a report submitted as required above, such person shall act as a "mandated reporter" under the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/1 et seq.) by making a report to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) at their Hotline (telephone # 1-800-252-2873). This law provides protection from liability to any person who makes a report in good faith.

The call should be made in the presence of a second responsible adult or the Head of Staff. In addition, any specific instructions issued by DCFS should be followed.

### **MANDATED REPORTERS**

In addition to state defined "mandated reporters," Clergy, Certified Christian Educators, Elders, and Deacons are required by the *Book of Order* to report knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities (*Book of Order*, Sections G-4.0302; G-2.0102).

Non-clergy staff and volunteers who are not professionals named in the IL Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act are not mandated reporters under the law.

### **INCIDENT REPORT FORM**

In addition to any State reporting form that may be required, within 48 hours after the incident, each staff member or volunteer with knowledge of the incident shall complete the Church Incident Report form and deliver the form to the Head of Staff.

### **ALLEGED OFFENDER SUSPENDED IMMEDIATELY, AS NECESSARY**

If an allegation of child abuse or sexual misconduct on the grounds of the Church or at a Church function is supported by evidence sufficient to cause reasonable concern with the Head of Staff, an Associate Pastor, the Senior Administrative Assistant and/or Church attorney, then the alleged offender, whether staff or volunteer, shall be confronted by two of the above named individuals and, if necessary, should be suspended immediately from all Church duties (this may be with or without pay) involving supervision and/or care of children until such time as the matter is resolved. Suspension shall in no way imply an admission of guilt or be treated as an admission of guilt, but as protection for all parties involved in the allegation until further investigation can be made.

To protect the child or youth from further possible abuse or harassment, the Church will prohibit the accused individual access to the alleged victim and other children and youth in ministries sponsored by the Church.

In the event of an unsubstantiated allegation, the Head of Staff or an Associate Pastor will make a determination as to whether the individual will be allowed to return to work as an employee or volunteer at the Church. They will consider the individual's likely effectiveness in working with children/youth following an allegation and investigation of child abuse. An employee has the right to appeal the decision to the Personnel Committee. A volunteer has the right to appeal the decision to the Clerk of Session who will address the situation with the Session in the appropriate time and manner.

Church employees and volunteers are expected to cooperate fully with the investigation authorities, such as the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) with guidance from the Church attorney.

### **MEDIA INQUIRIES**

It is important to anticipate that questions from the media may arise. Media inquiries shall be directed to and addressed by the Head of Staff or by someone designated by the Head of Staff authorized to release any information regarding an allegation, except where the law requires others to release information, such as to a protective services investigator or a police officer. All employees and volunteers will be instructed to make “No Comment” statements during the period of investigation of the allegation. If the accused is a pastor, the media shall be referred to the Chicago Presbytery.

### **PASTORAL CARE**

The pastoral staff shall coordinate pastoral care and professional counseling as needed for the alleged victim, those reporting the incident, the accused, others affected by the allegations, and their respective families.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY – IDENTITIES OF INVOLVED PERSONS NOT DISCLOSED**

Regardless of the circumstances, the identity of the reporting person, the accused, and the alleged victim, and the details of the situation should not be disclosed except to those who are professionally involved in the case or to the persons to whom reporting is mandated.

All information obtained through complaints or allegations of abuse or misconduct or from subsequent investigations shall be held strictly confidential in a secure location in the Church. Access is permitted only to those persons who have a designated legitimate interest.

Concerns include:

1. Every report of a concern regarding the children or youth of the Church shall be evaluated to determine if it in fact represents a report or a suspicion of Child Abuse. Such concerns will be processed as described by this policy.
2. The Safe Sanctuary Steering Committee shall evaluate any report of a concern related to child and youth protection and safety, even if it does not fall under the legal definition of abuse or its suspicion, to assure proper follow up on the issue.
3. All concerns reported shall be documented and maintained for review by the Steering Committee of notable trends or patterns of unacceptable activity. If a trend or pattern develops, the Steering Committee will report to the Safe Sanctuary Review and Implementation Committee. If a conflict of interest is noted during the review, other Church staff will perform the review.

The file of written concerns may be reviewed in summary form by the Safe Sanctuary Review and Implementation Committee.

## **ADDRESSING KNOWN OFFENDERS WHO ARE MEMBERS**

At First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights, we seek to live in a covenant with God and with one another and to be a redemptive community to all who are members. We also acknowledge that redemptive action and responsible action can, at times, be in tension or even in seeming opposition. We embrace this fact as a natural part of seeking to be the Church in the world.

We adopt these procedures for ministering to those among us who are known offenders of children and youth while maintaining our focus on protecting the children and youth of our Church.

1. Known offenders are required to make their status and any terms of probation known to the Head of Staff or an Associate Pastor.
2. The Head of Staff will appoint a group of 3-5 elders to establish appropriate boundaries, in writing, governing the life of the offender within the Church, including areas on campus where he/she may go unaccompanied. The Session will receive training in protection of children and youth and in dealing with known offenders. No decision made by this group will conflict with any provisions of the Church Safe Sanctuary Policy.
3. The known offender will give written acknowledgement and acceptance of the Church's Safe Sanctuary Policy and of the boundaries imposed.
4. At no time is a known offender to be assigned to ministries with children and youth.
5. At no time is a known offender to congregate with children and youth.
6. At no time is a known offender allowed in areas of the Church or grounds dedicated to children and youth or in use primarily by children and youth.
7. As circumstances warrant, the Head of Staff may identify a known offender to Church employees and volunteers whose ministries should be informed of this fact.
8. Known offenders will receive the normal pastoral care afforded any member.
9. Should a known offender disregard the terms established in this policy, or should a known offender disregard any boundaries or conditions set by the Head of Staff and his/her appointed group, the violation will be handled through the Rules of Discipline in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

## SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY FORMS

- Background Screening Consent and Church Activity Form  
*First year and every six years thereafter*
- Safe Sanctuary Policy Training Verification Form  
*First year and every three years thereafter*
- Employee and Volunteer Recommitment Form  
*Annually*
- Children/Youth Transportation Form  
*As needed, if driving*
- Incident Report Form (found on First Pres website)
- Outside Organization Leaders Release Form