

**Safe Church Policy**

First Presbyterian of Bend

Revised October 2019

**First Presbyterian is committed to being a life-giving entity by providing a safe, secure, and nurturing environment for those participating in our ministry activities – children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We also seek to minimize vulnerability to unwarranted accusations of improper behavior that our organization, volunteers, and employees may experience as they fulfill their duties. To fulfill these commitments as fully as possible, the following procedures are to be used, without exception.**

**OBJECTIVES**

All ministry and programs will incorporate this policy into all activities, ensure their staff and volunteers are screened, trained, and receive clear communication of expectations. Outside organizations using the church building must be aware of FPC policy and either pledge their agreement, or present a policy alternative that can be kept on file.

**APPLICABILITY**

The policy applies to all FPC-sanctioned activities on and off the FPC grounds.

**GENERAL DEFINITIONS**

The following definitions are to clarify the Safe Church Policy:

* **FPC**- First Presbyterian Church of Bend
* **Worker-** Any person who participates in any paid or unpaid level at FPC-sponsored events serving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
  + **FPC Staff-** Includes all personnel on the payroll of First Presbyterian of Bend, whether lay or clergy.
  + **Volunteer-** Includes any unpaid person who enters into or offers him or herself for an FPC-related service.
* **Youth-** Anyone from sixth grade through seventeen years of age.
* **Child-** Anyone from birth through fifth grade.
* **Vulnerable Adult -** Any person eighteen years old or older, without the developmental or cognitive capacity to consent.
* **Abuse-** Any action, or failure to take action, including, but not limited to, the following, as defined by Oregon State Law:
  + **Physical abuse**
  + **Verbal and/or emotional abuse**
  + **Sexual abuse**
    - * Sexual Exploitation
      * Sexual Harassment
  + **Misuse of Technology -** the use of technology that results in the harassing or abusing of child, youth, or vulnerable adults.

**POLICIES**

**Supervision**

Ministry leaders will be responsible to supervise program-specific workers. At least two screened, unrelated adults shall be present during all activities involving children, youth or vulnerable adults (the “Two Adult Rule”). However, for times when this precaution cannot be supported, three individuals (at least one being an adult) shall be present during all activities involving children, youth or vulnerable adults (the “Rule of Three”). For special circumstances that increase the likelihood of abuse or false allegations of abuse, the Two Adult Rule is preferred. All activities involving youth, children or vulnerable adults must take place in a visible and accessible space. Classroom doors must remain open at all times, unless there is a window in the door. Doors must always remain unlocked while persons are in the room (except in the case of an emergency lock-down).

When a single child, youth or vulnerable adult must be transported and there are less than three people in total, the driver must obtain permission directly from the parent or guardian. For the entire duration of the drive, the passenger present must either be on a phone call with someone or the driver must record audio.

When using the restroom young children will be accompanied to and from the door of the restroom. If a child requires assistance, then prop the restroom door open before entering to assist. If assistance in the stalls is required, it is recommended that two screened adults be present (wiping, diapers, etc.). Children can be allowed to utilize the restroom alone when restrooms are directly accessible to children from the room where children’s activities are taking place and not accessible to the general public.

**Social Media—Electronic Communications**

General Social Media Policy: When clergy or workers, acting in their capacity as representatives of FPC or its entities, lead or coordinate a group activity using social media, they are responsible for monitoring group communications.

Social Networking Code of Conduct: Each person who leads using the resources of social media shall apply this Social Networking Code of Conduct:

• Prohibit comments that are, or could be construed by any observer, to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

• Prohibit sexually-oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.

• Prohibit private messages between FPC Staff or workers and children, youth, or vulnerable adults that occur without parent or guardian awareness

• Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive, or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.

• Encourage parents to play a role in monitoring their children’s and youth interactions with employees and volunteers.

• Deny participation of individuals who repeatedly violate the code of conduct.

**PROCEDURES**

**Screening**

* Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a position that involves working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will complete and return the appropriate application and background check authorization.
* The ministry leader, or designee, will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. All application materials – the application form, background checks, reference checks, notes from interviews, etc. – will be stored in the locked personnel file cabinet at FPC for at least ten years.
* The ministry leader, or designee, will check at least two references to confirm the information that the candidate provided on his/her application and will conduct a criminal background check through a state law enforcement agency or other provider of such services.
* When indicated by our reference and/or background checks, candidates who pose a threat to others, or have a prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, will be removed immediately from consideration for ministry positions anywhere within our organization.
* Workers who are regularly in contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will complete a brief renewal application every three years.

**Training**

Each worker will receive a copy of the Safe Church Policy and attest to having read and agree to follow this policy. Workers with direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults are required to complete an FPC-approved abuse prevention program. The worker is provide evidence of completion, or complete this within the first 90 days of serving and repeat the prevention program every three years. Additional, program-specific training may be required.

**Recordkeeping**

All ministry functions involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults should maintain an attendance list for every function. Record the date of the function, along with the names of all ministry leaders, supervisors, and participants (unless participant anonymity is necessary).

**Reporting**

FPC believes it is an ethical obligation to protect those that are vulnerable. In particular, all clergy are legally obligated under mandatory reporting laws to report actual or suspected abuse of children, youth, or vulnerable adults, to the Oregon Department of Human Services Child Protection Services (DHS).

FPC will publicize a procedure for reporting any prohibited actions and have copies available at all times in a public place.

Any FPC worker shall call DHS to report the suspected abuse within twenty-four hours. The reporter and any involved adults shall complete the Abuse Incident Report Form. The reporter shall notify his/her immediate supervisor, staff, or clergy. Staff shall report the incident to a First Presbyterian pastor who will receive the form and appoint a responding team to investigate.

If the child, youth, or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, the worker shall IMMEDIATELY call 911. Additionally, the worker is to remove the person from danger, if reasonably possible.

Any person who has any information regarding a failure to comply with the Safe Church Policy shall immediately report to their supervisor.

Department of Human Services (DHS) Deschutes County 541-548-9499

Deschutes County Sheriff 541-693-6911

City of Bend Police 541-322-2960

**Responding**

Pastoral staff will be informed of policy infractions, supervise responses and mediate disputed actions. Supervising ministry staff will talk with the offending person and remind them of the Safe Church Policy and program specific training. If deemed necessary, an investigation by DHS and/or law enforcement will be initiated, and the offending person shall not be allowed to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults until the investigation is completed. The outcome of the investigation will dictate the access the offending person has to children, youth and vulnerable adults in the future.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Ministers**

Ministers are governed by the Presbytery Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy and other Presbytery policies. In addition to conforming to Presbytery policy, ministers will be aware of all policies outlined here and will support workers in their implementation. Ministers will provide guidance and pastoral care in cases of suspected or actual child abuse. When individuals fail to pass the screening criteria for working with minors, the head pastor will be informed. The head pastor will ensure that key staff members are informed that such persons are not approved to have any contact with minors involved in FPC programs and activities.

**Session**

Session will be responsible for ensuring that all Presbytery and FPC policies regarding Safe Church are followed. Specifically, Session is responsible for:

* Appointing members of the Safe Church Task Force.
* Providing funds and resources necessary to carry out these policies.

**Ministries**

All Ministries will make sure that the Safe Church Policy is implemented. Ministries with programs or activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be responsible for screening, training, and providing clear communication of expectations, per Safe Church policy.

**Safe Church Task Force**

This task force will gather to evaluate the effectiveness of the current Safe Church Policy, revise and edit the policy as necessary at least every 3 years. The Task Force shall consist of leaders from the children and youth ministries, and at least one elder. Every effort shall be made to have both genders represented on the Task Force.