

Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedure

General Outline Revised 4/30/19

1. Statement of Policy
 - a. Biblical References
 - b. Principles
2. Screening & Selection
3. Safe Sanctuary Training
4. Monitoring & Supervision
5. Congregational Awareness
6. Responding
7. Administrative Practices
 - a. Reporting to Leadership
 - b. Ministry Standards
 - c. Monitoring Compliance with Standards

Appendices:

A – Definitions

Mandatory Reporter
Ordained Clergy
Progressive Discipline
Sexual Exploitation
Sexual Harassment
Sexual Misconduct
Suspected Abuse
Vulnerable Adult

B – Applications & Forms

C – Possible Interview & Reference Questions

D – Leadership and Reporting Roster

E – Code of Conduct

- General Requirements
- General Prohibitions
- Reporting Obligations
- Specific Interaction Standards
 - Approval and Affection
 - Verbal Interactions
 - Out-of-Program (Off-Site) Contact
 - One-on-one Interactions
 - Social Media Communications

F – Ministry Standards

- Adult-child Ratios
- Bathrooms, Locker Room and Out-of-the-Way Locations
- Transition and Free Time
- Transportation of Children
- Off-site Activities (Day Trips)
- Over-night Activities

Statement of Policy

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

“As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct.” (1 Peter 1:15)

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” (Mathew 19:14)

PRINCIPLES

As a community of Christian faith, First Presbyterian Church Fenton (FFPC) is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. In the event of suspected abuse of any kind, we will take action according to the guidelines and principles in this policy. The congregation of FFPC supports principles of Safe Sanctuary, which include individual responsibility to fulfill the highest standards of personal conduct toward others, and to lead and guide the congregation in fulfillment of the standards set by our Christian faith. FFPC strongly opposes and prohibits sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or any form of exploitation or abuse of others regardless of age, sex, or mental capacity. It is the intention of our congregation to affirmatively nurture good behavior, and to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, as necessary, discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Every member of the congregation, whether authorized clergy, employee, Elder, Deacon, lay staff, member, volunteer, or parent, has a role to lead those who look to them individually for guidance, to monitor their behavior and redirect them as they cross boundaries of Safe Sanctuary. Our congregation shall nurture good conduct as demonstrated by personal behaviors that are consistent with our Christian values. As we might conduct an orchestra, we shall guide and lead in ministry.

In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse, members, Leaders, and employees of the church should seek healing and assure the protection of all persons. Where possible, the privacy of persons should be respected and confidentiality of communications should be maintained. In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, Leaders, and employees of the church should seek to uphold the dignity of all persons involved, including persons who are alleging harm, persons who are accused of sexual misconduct, and the families and communities of each.

Screening & Selection

Prior to beginning their duties in ministry at FFPC, each candidate for employment, and volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults, shall be subject to the following qualifying steps:

Application & Qualification—

All employment candidates who work with children shall:

1. Complete an application reciting work history, education, ten (10) years of residence history and disclosure of criminal convictions. No answers may be omitted. Falsification of any aspect of the application shall be grounds for immediate dismissal. ([Appendix B – Applications & Forms](#))
2. Provide a minimum of three (3) references, including both work-related and personal character references.
3. Grant written permission to conduct a background check as specified by this policy.
4. Upon selection, sign an acknowledgement of these policies and procedures and fulfill all training obligations after assuming duties; within thirty (30) days for employees and thirty (30) days for Leaders and volunteers.

Volunteers shall be active members of the church, or otherwise affiliated with the church, for no less than six (6) months before being permitted to work in child-oriented programs. There shall be **no exceptions** to this policy, even when volunteer candidates come from another church with similar programs.

The Administration Committee Chair and Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff shall each interview separately and in person every candidate for employment to assess suitability for working with children, and specifically discuss the church's commitment to protecting children and other vulnerable persons from abuse. ([Appendix C – Interview & Reference Questions](#))

The Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff shall directly contact and interview at least three (3) references for each employment candidate a combination of professional and personal, ask standardized questions to assess suitability and document responses. ([Appendix C – Interview & Reference Questions](#))

Background Checking—

Church office staff shall submit a criminal background check meeting the following criteria to the Presbytery office for every employment candidate and Elder, Deacon, and volunteer :

1. National multi-state criminal records search
2. National sex offender registry search
3. Social security number trace and alias search
4. County criminal records search for every county where the applicant has lived or worked over the past seven (7) years.

Written permission to conduct a background check shall be obtained from each applicant prior to executing the check.

Criminal background checks shall be repeated every three years for employees and volunteers who work with children. Seasonal employees or volunteers who have been off the active rolls of the church shall have a new background check prior to resuming work or volunteering.

Approval Procedure—A committee of three (3) consisting of Administration Committee Chair, Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff, and Director of Christian Education shall review each background

check that contains any negative information and agree that the applicant is eligible for employment as Minister, employee or volunteer. If any designated reviewer is the subject of the negative report, they must be replaced by an appropriate designee determined by the remaining reviewers.

Where a criminal record exists, consideration shall be given to:

1. Seriousness of the crime;
2. Statutes that may legally disqualify the person from working with minors;
3. Length of time since the last offense;
4. Pattern of criminal activity; and
5. Activities the applicant has been involved in since the offense(s) occurred.

Conviction for the following crimes shall be considered barriers to employment or volunteer work with children:

1. Violent crimes
2. Sexual assault
3. Any abuse or neglect of a child
4. Drug offenses or driving offenses (depending upon position requirements)

Arrest data are not grounds for disqualification, only convictions. The status or relevance of other crimes will be considered individually.

Following the review, each committee member shall sign and date the application and disclosure form that becomes part of the applicant's or employee's permanent personnel file. [\(Appendix B—Authorized Adult Employee Application and Disclosure Form, \)](#)

Safe Sanctuary Training

Ministers and each new employee shall complete Safe Sanctuary training within thirty (30) days of assuming duties. Leaders (active Elders and Deacons) shall attend the Safe Sanctuary training during the first thirty (30) days of their three (3) year term, and annually thereafter. Fulfillment of training requirements shall be documented and maintained by the Director of Christian Education, and audited annually by the Administration Committee Chair.

Abuse prevention curriculum shall include:

1. Organization level
 - Review of expected conduct and boundaries defined in this Safe Sanctuary policy. (Appendix E – Code of Conduct)
 - Review of **Ministry Standards** (Appendix F – Ministry Standards)
 - Explanation of procedures for reporting violations of standards of conduct and suspected child abuse.
 - Explanation of individual statutory reporting obligations.
 - Identifying and managing high-risk situations such as bathroom use, transition times, and free times.
 - Physical security procedures.
2. Abuse prevention education:
 - Effects of sexual abuse.
 - Possible indicators of abuse and neglect.
 - Characteristics of abusers.
 - How to respond to incidents of child-on-child sexual abuse, even among young children.
 - High-risk activities and circumstances.
 - Supervision of children—Open Door Policy and 2 Adult Policy.
 - Protecting oneself from false allegations.

The Director of Christian Education shall assure that each Minister, Leader, volunteer, and employee has taken the Safe Sanctuary training and understand requirements. The Director of Christian Education shall provide additional supervision and guidance as required to assure required conduct for children's, youth, and family ministries, and the Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff shall supervise the other ministry areas.

Monitoring & Supervision

Our intent is to sustain relationships which require employees and volunteers to meet our abuse prevention objectives while being mutually supportive as a team. The objective of monitoring is, first, to protect children, then to protect staff from false allegations, and to protect the reputation of FFPC and its ministries.

In support of a practice of progressive discipline, violations of the **Code of Conduct** and **Ministry Standards** are to be recorded in personnel files. Concurrently, employees and volunteers are to understand that their job descriptions include the obligation to observe and report patterns of behavior that violate the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards**.

Director of Christian Education shall continuously monitor performance using a variety of techniques including:

1. Scheduled visits;
2. Unannounced random visits at unpredictable times;
3. Spontaneous interviews with children;
4. Planned interviews or surveys of children, employees, and volunteers;
5. Meeting regularly with individual employees and volunteers;
6. Group supervision meetings;
7. Reviewing site documentation (e.g. progress notes, incident logs, etc.).

Administration Committee Chair shall ensure the following are in place:

1. Monitor computer use and internet use.
2. Utilize filtering, firewalls and encryption technology to the extent practicable.
3. Assure that employees have reviewed the Social Media – Electronic Communications – Computer Use Policy.

Appropriate monitoring shall be conducted by Head-of-Staff.

Congregational Awareness

We are dedicated to a policy of open communication and education for the benefit of the children, parents, vulnerable adults and guardians we serve. They are entitled to know what to expect of our ministries, the Leaders who serve them, and to know the related policies and procedures created to protect the respective ministry participants.

This entire policy shall be posted on the FFPC website, www.ffpc.org. The webmaster will keep it up to date at the direction of Administration Committee Chair.

At the time children or vulnerable adults are enrolled in FFPC programs, the following documents shall be made available to parents or legal guardians by posting on our website or a copy provided as requested.

1. A copy of the FFPC **Code of Conduct (Appendix E)**, & **Ministry Standards (Appendix F)**
2. A summary of the content of the orientation to be provided to children and vulnerable adults regarding boundaries and reporting.
3. Information regarding the means to report violations of policy or suspicions of abuse.
4. Information regarding their personal obligation to report suspected abuse as it may exist under the laws of the State of Michigan.
5. An invitation to visit programs in progress at any time at their convenience.

Children and vulnerable adults shall be taught age-appropriate information about boundaries and how to protect themselves from abuse (**with reference to the Code of Conduct**). Parents and guardians shall be invited to receive the same Safe Sanctuary “abuse prevention” training as provided to employees and volunteers.

Parents/guardians shall be encouraged to report violations of policy, boundaries or suspected abuse to the Director, Chairperson, or volunteer of the respective ministry at which an incident has occurred, or the Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff. Alternatively, they may report incidents to the Administration Committee Chair. Anonymous reporting is permitted in the same manner and with the same precautions as reporting by Ministers or other observers.

If for any reason, the parent/guardian believes that the primary contacts have failed to respond or have not given credibility to the parent’s/guardian’s concerns, the latter may contact the church **Administration Committee Chair** to report those concerns.

Responding

First Presbyterian Church Fenton (FFPC) is committed to prompt, professional and measured response to all circumstances, which may range from violations of these policies and procedures to suspicions or allegations of abuse. We are committed to (1) seriously consider the concerns of victims; (2) undertake a fair investigation of policy violations; (3) protect the confidentiality of parties involved in investigation; (4) report to as required and cooperate fully with public authorities; and (5) communicate fully with the congregation within the bounds of individual rights to confidentiality.

In ordinary administrative matters we expect employees and volunteers to address concerns with their immediate supervisors. However, situations affecting the health and welfare of children and vulnerable adults require a direct and expedited means of communication to Ministers in leadership who can act upon concerns when an observer or victim is uncertain their concerns will be given attention.

The PC(U.S.A.) has jurisdiction over its members, officers, and employees such that if a member, officer, or employee is alleged to have committed an offense against Scripture or the PC(U.S.A.) Constitution, the church has the duty to inquire into the allegations and, if the allegations are proven, to correct the behavior of the member, officer, or employee and ensure the safety of others in the community. Allegations of sexual misconduct are always considered allegations of offense against Scripture or the PC(U.S.A.) Constitution that trigger the disciplinary processes of the PC(USA) set forth in the *Book of Order*.

Responsibility of Employees and Volunteers—

Each employee, Leader, or volunteer is obligated to fulfill the **Code of Conduct** (Appendix E) and **Ministry Standards** (Appendix F) both by living the standard and helping others to do the same.

When any employee or volunteer observes violations of the **Code of Conduct**, whether committed by an employee, volunteer or other person, or observe any other circumstance they find suspicious or feel is inappropriate, or may rise to the level of suspected abuse, they have a **right and duty to report** it directly to the Director or Chairperson of the particular ministry to which the observation applies (primary contact). Respective Directors and Chairpersons are identified in **Appendix D – Leadership & Reporting Roster** and will be distributed by the **Director of Christian Education** annually at the **Safe Sanctuary training**.

Reporting responsibility includes incidents of child-on-child sexual activity, dangerous behaviors, employee-on-employee sexual harassment, bullying of any kind, exploitation of a vulnerable adult, or circumstances which rise to the level of abuse requiring action by a mandatory reporter.

Responsibility of Authorized Clergy, Directors, Elders and Deacons (Leaders)—

FFPC expects that Ministers, Directors and Leaders especially, will relate to each other in a cordial and professional manner, and in matters of Safe Sanctuary will support, encourage and mentor each other.

Each person in a ministry leadership capacity is required to fulfill the standards for **Monitoring & Supervision** along with the **Code of Conduct** and **Ministry Standards**. Church Leaders shall foster Safe Sanctuary by example and by correcting, mentoring and counseling followed by “progressive discipline.” Whether upon direct observation or as a result of reports from others, each church Leader shall take affirmative steps to correct behavior or enforce policies.

Each Leader shall document by notes in an individual file actions taken to counsel and correct individuals to include verbal warnings or written notices.

At such time as verbal warnings are found to be ineffective and a written notice is required in order to correct behavior, each Leader shall do so with the advice and approval of his/her supervisor. A Leader may proceed to a higher level of supervision if he/she feels there is a conflict of interest created by another relationship such as family ties. A Leader may be expected to recuse him/herself from the reporting and disciplinary process in situations where there appears to be a conflict as a result of family ties or outside-of-church relationships, but may not do so when he/she is a mandatory reporter as prescribed by Michigan State law.

At such time as warnings, verbal and written, are deemed unsuccessful, and termination from ministry, employment or volunteer status is required, a termination letter shall be issued only with the authority and over the signature of the Administration Committee Chair.

Responsibility of Mandatory Reporters—

The State of Michigan has defined abuse for the purpose of child protection/vulnerable adult statutes and mandatory reporting, and each person who is considered a mandatory reporter under the statutes of Michigan shall in good faith report suspected abuse or neglect within 24 hours to Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff and/or legal authorities in the case of immediate threat.

Due to different reporting procedures required by the state, whether for child or vulnerable adult, FFPC prefers that a mandatory reporter immediately first report circumstances requiring reporting to authorities to Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff. Without delay, and as required by state law, the highest level Leader who is considered to be a mandatory reporter shall make the initial report to police or child welfare authorities on behalf of FFPC.

Other Reportable Abuse—

Other kinds of abuse occur which are outside the bounds of Michigan laws and to which FFPC requires a response. The following circumstances constitute reportable abuse that requires response to include counseling, correction, progressive discipline and termination:

1. Child-on-child sexual activity;
2. Adult-on adult sexual harassment
3. Dangerous behaviors (hazing, truth or dare, drinking, etc.);
4. Bullying, whether child-on-child, adult-on-adult, or adult-on-child;
5. Exploitation of a vulnerable adult, physically, mentally or financially.

All such activity shall be reported by Minister(s), Elders, Deacons, Chairpersons, volunteers or employees in the same manner as any violation of the **Code of Conduct or Ministry Standards**. In the event of out-of-program circumstances where there is not an identifiable direct Minister supervisor, reports shall be made to the Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff.

Other Disciplinary Processes—

Other behaviors not necessarily involving children or vulnerable adults, or which may not be considered strictly illegal, are subject to other disciplinary practices as may be set out in governing documents of the congregation or of the denomination. Behaviors subject to other adjudication may include but are not limited to:

1. Sexual harassment, whether among employees or volunteers;
2. Clergy professional boundary violations;
3. Sexual exploitation;

4. Sexual relationships or misconduct between a Minister and a minor or adult member, even when permitted by law.

All such activity shall be reported by employees, volunteers or Leaders in the same manner as any violation of the **Code of Conduct or Ministry Standards**. In the event of out-of-program circumstances where there is not an identifiable direct ministry Director or Chairperson, reports shall be made to the Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff.

Cooperation with Investigations—

FFPC expects and requires the cooperation of all Ministers, Elders, Deacons, Directors, Chairpersons, volunteers and other employees in the investigation of violations of the **Code of Conduct, Ministry Standards** or other misconduct, including a complainant, witness, and the accused offender. We may interview these individuals privately and take oral and/or written statements from them. Any person who fails to cooperate with such an investigation or to provide complete and truthful information may be subject to disciplinary action.

Notification of Parents—

A minor child may be party to an incident either as an initiator or as the victim. Whether a child is initiator or victim may not be clear in all circumstances, such as a child-on-child incident. And violation of policy does not necessarily create a victim. While notification of parents of such circumstances may be warranted, utmost care in communication is required.

Therefore, a Minister, Elder, Deacon, Director, Chairperson, volunteer or employee having knowledge of an incident which warrants communication to a parent shall first advise their immediate supervisor, who shall consult with Pastor(s)/Head-of-Staff. While communicating with a parent, and **being mindful of the importance of timely communication**, care shall be given to assessing:

1. The specific facts;
2. Whether a disciplinary or termination process is required;
3. Whether a child should be dismissed from a program (requiring notification of other parents/guardians);
4. Whether mandatory reporting is a factor;
5. Who shall and in what manner communicate with the parents/guardian;
6. Whether the Pastor should be involved in the communication;
7. Tentative remedial steps to prevent a further incident.

Notification of parents shall not be delayed when immediate medical care is required.

Administrative Practices

Reporting to Leadership—

The Elder, Deacon, Director, Chairperson, volunteer or employee of each ministry shall report directly to Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff incidences of suspicious or inappropriate interactions (adult-child; child-child; adult-vulnerable adult), sexual activity between children, and allegations of abuse or violations of boundaries.

If for any reason, the observer believes that the primary contact has failed to respond or has not given credibility to the observer, the observer may contact the church **Administration Committee Chair** to report the observation. The **Administration Committee Chair** ([Appendix D – Leadership & Reporting Roster](#)), while respecting and protecting the confidentiality wishes of the observer or victim, if any, shall ascertain with reasonable certainty the relationship of the observer to the incident. The **Administration Committee Chair** shall report the circumstances to the Pastor(s)/Head-of-Staff and then Session. The **Administration Committee Chair** shall initiate (1) investigation of the facts, (2) corrective action or (3) reporting as may be required by Michigan laws.

If the person who is accused of committing a boundary violation is a member, Minister, Elder, Deacon, Director, volunteer, or employee of a congregation, the report of allegations should be made to the Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff, the Clerk of Session, and the Administration Committee Chair. If the person who is accused of committing the violation is a Minister, the report of allegations should be made to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery who will respond using the *Book of Order* Rules of Discipline.

Ministry Standards—

Ministries subject to this standard shall include on-site ministry and mission activity, and off-site activity in which children or vulnerable adults participate.

No new ministry or program may be created in the name of FFPC without the expressed written consent of the Session, after consideration of the benefits to the church, intended constituents of the program, financial viability, and the risks attendant to the activity and methods to be employed to manage risk.

Prior to use of church facilities by outside organizations (lessees) to conduct activities equivalent to those sited above, and whether or not rent or contributions are provided to the First Presbyterian Church Fenton (lessor), there shall be an evaluation of whether the organization has established sufficient standards, according to our own Safe Sanctuary Policy, to be regarded as a competent partner in ministry. A lease or use agreement shall be required with the organization, which lease shall cite fulfillment of the organization's written or statutory standards as a condition of continued occupancy of church property. The use agreement shall contain terms requiring that "lessee hold harmless, defend and indemnify lessor for claims arising out of its occupancy of and activities on lessor's property" (or equivalent language). The organization shall be required to demonstrate maintenance of insurance, to include personal property, workers compensation, general liability and professional liability coverages that may apply to the activity (for example, sexual misconduct liability, professional counseling liability, educators professional liability).

Monitoring Compliance with Standards—

The success and strength of this policy is not created by its words, but by the actions of our Ministers who must carry it out. While the policy generally prescribes [Safe Sanctuary](#), Ministers are called upon to document that they are engaged in achieving the objectives of the policy. From time to time Ministers, Directors, Elders, Deacons, and Committee Chairpersons will be required to re-direct, correct and remediate individuals who have not maintained the **Code of Conduct** ([Appendix E](#)) or **Ministry Standards** ([Appendix F](#)). While violations of the **Code of Conduct or Ministry Standards** do not constitute an incident of suspected abuse requiring statutory reporting, they do require a response.

Following the pattern of good employment practices, Ministers, Directors, Elders, Deacons, and Committee Chairpersons shall follow a process of progressive discipline in supervisory relationships with both employees and volunteers. This process recognizes that an isolated violation of the **Code of Conduct or Ministry Standards** may not be intended or malicious; the first transgression may simply indicate the failure to understand requirements. Nevertheless, repeated violations cannot be tolerated.

Each Minister, Director and Committee Chairperson shall employ progressive discipline, and maintain records of both monitoring and disciplinary activity. As required elsewhere in this policy, reports shall be provided to Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff, Administration Committee Chair, and ultimately the Session which shall document regular monitoring activity and that steps in progressive discipline have been taken. While in most situations progressive discipline will be the normal process, it is understood that an egregious violation of the **Code of Conduct or Ministry Standards** may require immediate termination of an employee or removal of a volunteer, subject to the conditions for termination specified in [Appendix A – Definitions, Progressive Discipline](#).

APPENDIX A — Definitions

Mandatory Reporter—Includes those persons required by the Michigan Child Protection Law, (1975 PA 238, MCL 722.621, et. seq.), by virtue of their profession, to report suspected abuse to police or child welfare agencies. The PC(U.S.A) also requires ordained Ministers, Certified Christian Educators, Elders and Deacons to be mandated reporters.

Authorized Clergy—Includes any person who is admitted to ordained ministry by the PC(U.S.A.), who serves the congregation in any capacity whether called as pastor or serving in a retired, *emeritus*, administrative or volunteer capacity. Clergy who are active, have pastoral responsibilities and are called by the congregation shall have fulfilled the background checking requirements.

Chair of Administration Committee – Where used in this document, the Administration Committee Chair includes an Elder serving on the Administration Committee and designated by the Chair.

Progressive Discipline—A system of escalating discipline for non-reportable offenses for employees as an alternative to summary termination for a policy infraction, even a minor one. Progressive steps in discipline are as follows:

1. Counseling or a verbal warning—It is necessary to document that such a meeting occurred. It is sometimes appropriate that more than one supervisory person be present for this step.
2. Written warning—A formal letter is prepared and delivered to the employee/volunteer, while a copy is maintained in the employee/volunteer file.
3. Suspension or demotion—This may be appropriate for repeated violations of **Ministry Standard** violations. This step might be skipped for **Code of Conduct** violations.
4. Termination—Repeated willful violations of the **Code of Conduct or Ministry Standards** call for termination of employment, whether employee or volunteer. However, no Minister has authority to terminate an employee or volunteer unilaterally; at least two levels of supervision must make a judgment on termination. Legal counsel may be consulted if deemed necessary.

In extreme circumstances it will be appropriate to skip steps and proceed with immediate termination. However, the same rules apply to a summary termination.

Progressive discipline for volunteers:

1. A verbal warning and correction is given by the area Supervisor of the activity
2. The volunteer is counseled by Pastor or Elder & the Supervisor
3. The volunteer is removed and found an alternative place to serve
4. Written request to cease participation in ministry by session

In the case of an Elder, Deacon, or Minister, progressive discipline steps will be followed according to the Rules of Discipline found in the Book of Order.

An equivalent to progressive discipline shall apply to children and vulnerable adults participants served by our church. When these individuals are observed engaging in inappropriate interactions or unwanted physical contact, it is expected that they will be immediately stopped or redirected to another activity. When violations are repeated and the individual is unresponsive,

the next step is to engage the parent or guardian in a meeting about the behavior with the expectation that the parent will provide follow-up discussion and discipline of the participant. If this step fails to achieve positive results, then additional steps must be taken, culminating with expulsion of the participant from the church program.

Sexual Exploitation—Sexual activity or contact allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in or be depicted in sexual acts.

Sexual Harassment—Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations including through use of social media through e-mail, texting, Tweeting or Facebook comments;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is not permissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church. For example, it is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

Sexual Misconduct—A violation of the role of persons in a role of authority who are called upon to exercise integrity, sensitivity, and caring in a trusting relationship. Misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing the trusting relationship to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, or unjust manner. The person in authority is always responsible to maintain the appropriate role and to prohibit an inappropriate relationship, even if consent is given.

Suspected Abuse/Neglect—Actual abuse consists of physical, sexual or mental abuse inflicted by a person responsible for a child’s health, welfare or care, who may be a parent, guardian or other person having access to a child. Abuse may include neglect of a person’s health as a result of failure to properly feed, clothe or attend to apparent illness or mental well-being. As a caregiver in ministry, one need not directly witness, nor is one likely to directly witness actual abuse. It is sufficient to suspect abuse based upon observations of general health, physical condition, patterns of irregular behavior and environmental factors. Examples of observations might include: bruising on multiple occasions, weight loss, chronic physical illness, and anti-social or excessively withdrawn behavior. Environmental factors may include highly contentious divorce and custody battles, or parental drug use. One must use judgment in assessing multiple factors which lead to suspicion of abuse.

Vulnerable Adult—Any adult person who by reason of profound physical disability or dependence, developmental disability, mental illness, advanced age, relative social power or cultural circumstances may be susceptible to physical abuse, sexual exploitation, financial exploitation, or manipulation as a consequence of being unable to physically resist, or render judgments regarding physical, mental, financial or environmental well-being. Such persons may be unable to act independently and may, to their detriment, manifest high levels of trust or fear of persons of perceived power or authority.

APPENDIX B – Applications & Forms

1. Authorized Adult Employee Application and Disclosure Form
2. Background Investigation Results
3. Professional Reference Interview Form
4. Qualification Form & Agreement for Use of Personally Owned Vehicles
5. FFPC Acknowledgement of Policies Form

**First Presbyterian Church Fenton
Authorized Adult Employee Application and Disclosure Form**

NAME: _____
 LAST FIRST MIDDLE

ADDRESS: _____
 STREET CITY STATE ZIP CODE

_____ DAYTIME PHONE EVENING PHONE EMAIL

References: One reference must be related to you and the other references must not be related to you. (Attach additional page(s) as necessary.)

NAME (1)

RELATIONSHIP _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE ZIP CODE _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

NAME (2)

RELATIONSHIP _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE ZIP CODE _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

NAME (3)

RELATIONSHIP _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE ZIP CODE _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

I have been a member of this church since _____

I have been a friend of this church since _____

List the Counties and States you have resided in the last ten (10) years _____

APPLICANT:

I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to a crime. (*Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state*)

True Not true

If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

Yes No

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between persons seeking employment in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between employees and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize First Presbyterian Church Fenton and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

First Presbyterian Church Fenton employee recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize First Presbyterian Church Fenton and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that First Presbyterian Church Fenton will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

If I am offered and accept employment with the church, I agree to comply with its published policies and rules, including those related to harassment of employees, reporting known or suspected child neglect or abuse and similar requirements. If requested to do so, I will cooperate with any church investigation of a possible violation of church policies and rules by providing complete and truthful information in an oral and/or written statement.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the FFPC Safe Sanctuary Policy.

PRINT NAME & SIGN

DATE

Background Investigation Results

EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER APPLICANT: _____

Personal interview conducted by _____ on _____
DATE

Reference inquiries completed by _____ on _____
DATE

A criminal background check was conducted on the candidate using the following sources:

- National multi-state criminal records search
- National sex offender registry search
- Social security number trace and alias search
- County criminal records search for every County where the applicant has lived or worked over the past ten (10) years. List the counties here: _____
- Motor Vehicle Record
- Other (Identify)

The (Employment Committee) has reviewed the investigation with the following result:

- We have reviewed the criminal history of Applicant and determined, based on the information we had available at this time, the applicant would be acceptable for the position.”

OR

- We have reviewed the criminal history of Applicant and determined, based on the information we had available at this time, the applicant is not acceptable for the position.”

This clearance shall remain as a permanent record in the employment file.

MEMBER _____
Signature Date

MEMBER _____
Signature Date

MEMBER _____
Signature Date

Professional Reference Interview Form

According to the nature of the position being applied for, the term "vulnerable adult" may be used in lieu of "children" or also included in this questionnaire.

Employee Applicant: _____ Date: _____

Name of Reference: _____

Address: _____

Phone Numbers: _____

Hello, my name is _____ with First Presbyterian Church Fenton. (The Applicant) _____ has applied for a position with us and said you might be able to tell us about his/her previous work with children. Is this a good time for you to talk with me?

I would like to start by letting you know that the applicant has applied for a position working with children, so it is extremely important for us to make sure that every applicant is suitable for this type of position. I appreciate your help with this.

How long have you known the applicant? _____

How do you know the applicant? _____

How would you rate the applicant's ability to learn new information and skills?

____ Above satisfactory ____ Satisfactory ____ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of when the applicant was able to learn something new and use it in his/her work?

We are looking for someone who will adhere to the standard policies of our organization. How would you rate the applicant's ability to follow policies and procedures?

____ Above satisfactory ____ Satisfactory ____ Below satisfactory

How would you rate the applicant's ability to work with and relate to other adults?

____ Above satisfactory ____ Satisfactory ____ Below satisfactory

Have you observed the applicant working with children? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, how would you rate the applicant's ability to relate to children?

____ Above satisfactory ____ Satisfactory ____ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of how the applicant relates to children?

In what types of situations have you observed the applicant working well with children (enjoying the work, being effective)?

In what types of situations have you observed the applicant not working well with children (becoming frustrated, angry, resentful or non-productive)?

How would you rate the applicant's ability to use good judgment in normal conditions?

____ Above satisfactory ____ Satisfactory ____ Below satisfactory

How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with children?

____ Above satisfactory ____ Satisfactory ____ Below satisfactory

How would you rate the applicant's ability to use good judgment in stressful conditions?

____ Above satisfactory ____ Satisfactory ____ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of when the applicant used good judgment?

Are you aware of any reason why we should not allow the applicant to work with the children we serve?

Would you be comfortable placing one of your own loved ones in the care of the applicant? Why or why not?

What are the applicant's hobbies and recreational activities?

How would you rate the applicant's ability to relate to adults?

___ Above satisfactory ___ Satisfactory ___ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of how the applicant relates to adults?

We need a person who can be supportive and understanding of a child's needs. How would you rate the applicant's ability to be genuinely supportive and understanding to a person in need?

___ Above satisfactory ___ Satisfactory ___ Below satisfactory

Think of a time when the applicant was able to show genuine concern for another person who needed comfort. Tell me about that time.

How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with children?

___ Above satisfactory ___ Satisfactory ___ Below satisfactory

Do you have any additional comments or questions?

Signature of Interviewer

___/___/___
Date

**Qualification Form & Agreement for Use of Personally Owned Vehicles
First Presbyterian Church Fenton
VOLUNTEER DRIVER**

Name: _____ Birth Date: _____

Home phone: _____ Work phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Years of driving experience: _____

Driver License # & State: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Insurance Carrier _____ Expiration date: _____

Liability Policy Limit -- Bodily Injury \$ _____ Property Damage \$ _____

1. Are all licensed vehicles you own covered by insurance as required by law? Yes, No
2. Have you ever been denied a driver's license or had one suspended or revoked? Yes, No
3. Have you had any moving traffic violations or accidents in the past three (3) years? Yes, No

If the answer to questions 2 or 3 is YES, explain. Give dates and details of violations and accidents on the back of this form.

I AGREE to the following as a condition of being permitted to act as a Volunteer Driver:

1. The vehicle owner's insurance is the primary liability insurance coverage in the event of an accident.
2. The owner of the vehicle which I am driving is responsible for keeping the vehicle in safe working order.
3. The owner of the vehicle is responsible for all damage to the owned vehicle however caused.
4. The owner of the vehicle shall maintain liability insurance in the amount of at least
 - Bodily Injury -- \$50,000 per person and \$100,000 per accident or \$200,000 combined single limit; and
 - Property Damage -- \$25,000 per accident
5. The church's insurance shall apply in excess of the vehicle owner's liability insurance limits in the event the primary limits are exhausted, and only to the extent the church is legally obligated to pay damages.
6. **I will not receive or initiate phone calls while operating a vehicle for church activities, include receiving or initiating text messages.**
7. I will indemnify and hold the church harmless from liabilities and damage resulting from my operation of a motor vehicle not owned by the church. The church will indemnify and hold harmless the volunteer driver for liabilities and damages resulting from acts or negligence of the church.

I hereby AFFIRM that the information I have given is stated truthfully and that I shall abide by the terms of the church's Vehicle Use Policy, and will promptly inform the church to any changes of the above

Attach a copy of Driver's License and current Insurance ID Card

Driver Signature: _____

FFPC Acknowledgement of Policies Form*

If offered a position as Minister, employee or volunteer:

(initial)

_____ I affirm that **application disclosures** are complete and truthful.

_____ **Agree to follow the Employee Handbook** (employees)—I have received a copy of the Personnel Manual on the date listed below. I understand that I am expected to read the entire manual. Furthermore, I understand that this manual is neither a contract of employment nor a legally-binding agreement. I have had an opportunity to read the manual, and I understand that I may ask the Pastor/Head-of-Staff or the Administrative Committee Chair any questions I might have concerning the manual. I accept the terms of the manual. I also understand that it is my responsibility to comply with the policies contained in this manual, and any revisions made to it. I further agree that if I continue employment with the church following any modifications to the manual, I thereby accept and agree to such changes.

_____ **Changes to the Safe Sanctuary Policy or Employee Handbook**—Since the information, policies, and benefits described in these documents are subject to change at any time, I acknowledge that revisions to these documents may occur, except to the church's policy of employment-at-will. All such changes will generally be communicated through official notices, and I understand that revised information may supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies. The Administrative Committee and the Session of FFPC have the ability to adopt any revisions to the policies in this manual.

_____ I have reviewed and agree to follow the **Code of Conduct and FFPC Ministry Standards**.

_____ I have reviewed and agree to comply with the policies and rules contained in this **Safe Sanctuary policy**, to include training, monitoring, reporting and ministry administrative procedures. I agree to meet standards for one-on-one relationships with children/adults as defined in the **Safe Sanctuary Policy**.

_____ I have reviewed and agree to follow the **Social Media – Electronic Communications – Computer Use Policy**.

_____ If requested to do so, I will cooperate with any investigation of a possible violation of civil laws or infractions, church policies and rules by providing complete and truthful information in an oral and/or written statements.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Received by the Church Office: Date

*A signed copy of this form will be placed in the employment or volunteer files.

APPENDIX C – Possible Interview Questions

The following questions may be used in a written application or personal interview. A single answer should not determine whether an applicant is selected or rejected. Along with other forms of information, answers to these questions can help you build a more complete picture of an applicant.

- **What type of supervisory situation do you prefer?**

If applicants are very independent, they may not fit in an organization whose policies and procedures require close supervision.

- **What age/sex of youth do you want to work with? How would you feel about working with a different age/sex?**

If an applicant seems fixated on one age/sex, be wary. However, it may be that the applicant has experience or is gifted with working with certain age groups. Asking follow-up questions about why an applicant has a strong preference can help you determine if there is cause for concern.

- **Is there anyone who might suggest that you should not work with youth? Why or why not?**

- **Why do you want the job?**

- **What would you do in a particular situation?**

Set up scenarios that involve potential concerns, boundary issues, or youth protection policies and interactions to gauge the applicant's response. Be concerned if applicants disregard the organization's policies and procedures or handle a situation poorly.

- **What makes you a good candidate for working with youth? What would your friends or colleagues say about how you interact with youth?**

- **What other hobbies or activities do you enjoy?**

Determine if applicants have mature, adult relationships—not just relationships with youth.

Source: *Policies & Procedures Resources*, Praesidium, Inc.

A more exhaustive set of interview questions along with an interpretive guide is available as part of a program self-assessment, which can be accessed at the Insurance Board website: www.insuranceboard.org. Go to **Safety Solutions/ SafeConduct™ Workbench**. Click on **Self-Assessment**. This resource is especially recommended for programs that deal with large numbers of children and where careful hiring decisions are required.

APPENDIX D – Leadership & Reporting Roster (list all Deacons and Elders and staff) (1-31-2020, updated annually)

The persons listed below are considered “primary contacts” for reporting for their respective Ministry or program. Each is also a “mandatory reporter” in the State of Michigan for the purpose of reporting “suspected child abuse” to law enforcement or child welfare authorities.

Any employee, volunteer, Minister or member of the congregation of First Presbyterian Church may report policy or procedure violations or circumstances of “suspected child abuse” to any of the persons listed below, but preferably to the person in whose ministry or program the incident has occurred.

Position	Name	Telephone	email address
Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff	Pastors Lindsey and Robbie Carnes	W-810-629-7801 Cell L-810-445-6780 Cell R-609-933-5372	Lindsey@ffpc.org Robbie@ffpc.org
Administration Committee Chair	Larry Zimbler	C-810-845-8665	larry@4squaretax.com
Director of Christian Education	Tina Ritchie	810-701-4136	Tina@ffpc.org
Media Spokesperson-Pastor	Pastors Lindsey and Robbie Carnes	W-810-629-7801 Cell L-810-445-6780 Cell R-609-933-5372	Lindsey@ffpc.org Robbie@ffpc.org
Law Enforcement Agency Child Protective Services	Fenton Police Department Michigan Department of Health and Human Services	810-629-5311 Statewide Hotline 855-444-3911 (24hrs)	(Download FORM DHS-3200) www.michigan.gov/MandatedReporter (File report within 72 hrs) DHS-CPS-CIGroup@michigan.gov Fax 616-977-1154

Prior to making an anonymous report, a person reporting must take into account how technology may reveal their identification (caller ID, email address, etc.). Nevertheless, the Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff and Administration Committee Chair will take care not to further compromise confidentiality.

APPENDIX E – Code of Conduct

This **Code of Conduct** defines individual responsibilities as Ministers, Leaders, employees or volunteers to meet the expectations of First Presbyterian Church Fenton with respect to behavior or conduct in the service of the ministries of the church, especially those which serve children and vulnerable adults.

General Requirements—

Each person subject to this Code shall:

1. Act as a team member in fulfilling ministry objectives,
2. Treat children and vulnerable adults with respect, and fairly without regard to race, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or religion,
3. Practice those behaviors we regard as necessary and positive, as well as to refrain from those behaviors which have been defined as prohibited.

General Prohibitions—

The following behaviors are prohibited at all times:

1. Display affection toward a child/client in privacy.
2. Use profanity or tell off-color jokes.
3. Discuss their sexual encounters with or around children, or in any way involve children in their personal problems or issues.
4. Date or become romantically involved with children or those under their authority and supervision.
5. Use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children. Smoking, in the presence of children, while working or volunteering is also prohibited.
6. Possess sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on Church property.
7. Have secrets with clients.
8. Stare at or comment on children's bodies.
9. Engage in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with children.
10. Work one-on-one with children in a private setting.
11. Abuse participant in anyway including (but not limited to) the following:
 - Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restrain
 - Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, 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 to engage in the following: hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, games of Truth or Dare, ridicule or humiliation or sexual activity
12. Manipulate or exploit a vulnerable adult in any way.

Reporting Obligations --

Each Minister or mandatory reporter shall report within 24 hours or immediately in case of an emergency:

1. Concerns or complaints about other employees and volunteers, other adults, or children to a supervisor. ([Appendix D – Leadership & Reporting Roster](#))
2. Allegations or incidents of suspected abuse to the designated law enforcement or child welfare authority. ([Appendix D – Leadership & Reporting Roster](#))

Specific Interaction Standards –

Each Minister, employee or volunteer of First Presbyterian Church Fenton shall conduct him/herself in a manner that fosters understanding of Safe Sanctuary in the context of serving children and vulnerable adults. The standards articulated below serve two purposes:

- To protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse or grooming for abuse elsewhere;
- To protect/prevent church staff from engaging in patterns of behavior that may be construed as abusive or predatory. While a single infraction of guidelines may not constitute abuse, a pattern of repeated violations will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from ministry.

1. Approval and Affection –

In providing approval or affection, the following guidelines apply:

<i>Appropriate Physical Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask permission to touch • Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs • Pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • High-fives and hand slapping • Verbal praise • Pats on the head when culturally appropriate • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders • Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations) <p>These may be inappropriate if unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer including, but not limited to: • Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Lap sitting • Wrestling • Piggyback rides • Tickling • Allowing a child to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg • Any type of personal massage given by or to a child • Showing affection in isolated area • Compliments relating to physique or body development • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas

2. Verbal Interactions –

How we speak with children establishes respect. The following guidelines apply:

<i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement • Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise • Corrective measures out of range of others where possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name-calling • Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving children in the personal problems or issues of employees and volunteers • Secrets • Cursing • Off-color or sexual jokes • Shaming • Belittling • Derogatory remarks • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate children • Derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family • Gossip

3. Out-of-Program (Off-Site) Contact –

FFPC When off-site contacts are appropriate the following guidelines are to be followed:

<i>Appropriate Outside Contact</i>	<i>Inappropriate Outside Contact</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking groups of children on an outing • Attending sporting activities with groups of children • Attending functions at a child's home, with parents present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking one child on an outing without the parents' written permission • Visiting one child in the child's home, without a parent present • Entertaining one child in the home of a church employee or volunteer • A lone child spending the night with a church employee or volunteer

4. One-on-One Interactions –

Because most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a child, private one-on-one meetings are to be avoided. When unavoidable, the following guidelines shall apply:

<i>One-on-One Interaction Guidelines</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When meeting one-on-one with a child, always do so in a public place in full view of others. • Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high fives, and handshakes. • If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by. • Inform other employees and volunteers that you are alone with a child and ask them to randomly drop in. (Ask to be supervised.) • Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted. <p>To the extent any of these guidelines may appear to be in conflict, the spirit of them is that one shall seek to be under the supervision of others while meeting privately with a child.</p>

5. Social Media – Electronic Communications – Computer Use Policy

General Social Media Policy -- No Minister, employee, volunteer or member of FFPC shall create or use a media site (web, Facebook, YouTube, or similar) in the name of or purporting to represent the church without the explicit written permission of the Session. When clergy or staff, acting in their capacity as a representative of the church, lead or coordinate a group activity using social media, each may use only official church sites/channels when they have been made available by the church. These may include web pages, Facebook, e-mail and similar means.

Communication with Children — Due to the attendant risk of electronic communications with children, especially the inability to supervise, the following standards shall apply:

- Employees and volunteers are discouraged from sending personal email and text messages to children and youth, unless it relates specifically to programs or scheduling. If a child or youth contacts an employee or volunteer with a personal issue, they will be encouraged to discuss it in person. Where appropriate, parents will also be included in the communications.
- Employees and volunteers are discouraged from personal messaging with children and youth using social networking websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.
- Personal social networking profiles and blogs of employees and volunteers must be private and inaccessible to children. Publicly visible accounts must adhere to the Code of Conduct.
- Employees and volunteers with personal profiles (not public profiles) on social networking sites may not request to be friends with children or approve friend requests from children.

Social Media Communications –

In order to extend the life of the congregation, enhance communication and develop participation of young people in the life of the church and its ministry, FFPC will authorize Social Media persons to manage the church's official website and organization Facebook page and social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram.

Authorized Social Media persons who shall create public pages on behalf of church programs are responsible to monitor communications and to assure that employees and volunteers do not have private (and possibly inappropriate) conversations with children.

If a child reveals abuse or inappropriate interactions with an adult, the Social Media person must report this information in the manner of any suspected abuse.

Social Networking Code of Conduct for Social Media persons

Each Social Media person (Minister, Director, Leader, employee or volunteer) who leads using the resources of social media shall apply this:

Social Networking Code of Conduct:

- Prohibit comments that are, or could be construed to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- Prohibit sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
- Prohibit private messages between employees and volunteers and children.
- Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.
- Provide children and their parents with this Social Networking Code of Conduct.
- Encourage parents to play a role in monitoring their children's interactions with employees and volunteers.
- Continuously remind children how to interact appropriately through social networking sites.
- Deny participation by individuals who repeatedly violate the Social Networking Code of Conduct.

The authorized Minister shall present this **Social Networking Code of Conduct** to children and parents/guardians by posting on our website or as requested.

APPENDIX F – FFPC Ministry Standards

These Ministry Standards are intended to provide a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults in a variety of circumstances. From time to time it may not be possible to fulfill the standard to the letter. Permission is granted to Ministers and Directors to waive a standard with justification. If it is found that consistent fulfillment of a standard is not practicable, the matter shall be elevated to the Administration Committee for resolution or amendment of these standards.

Adult-Child Ratios—

The minimum requirement for all activities is an adult-child ratio of 1:8, except that a ratio of 1:4 may apply to a classroom environment with children under the age of five (5). Employees or volunteers under the age of 18 are not included in the ratio.

In all cases, an employee or volunteer under the age of 18 working with minor children shall be under the supervision of an adult over the age of 21.

In unavoidable circumstances where 2 adults are not present at a youth activity, a 2 to 1 Rule shall apply as follows: 2 youth and 1 adult or 2 adults and 1 youth.

Employees or volunteer leaders under the age of 21 shall not supervise or lead a youth group in which the oldest participating minor child is less than five (5) years younger than the supervisor/leader.

Bathrooms, Locker Room and Out-of-the-Way Locations—

The following practices shall apply to supervision of bathrooms and changing areas:

1. Minimize presence of diverse child age groups at the same time.
2. No employee/volunteer shall enter with a single unrelated child unless the entry door is ajar (propped open) in a way that (s)he can be observed by others.
3. Children shall not enter these locations unsupervised.
4. Require children to ask permission before using bathrooms.

Employees and volunteers in leadership shall frequently and randomly check bathrooms to assure their security.

The following areas are to be off-limits: Kitchen, chancel, balcony, maintenance closets, access panels.

Transition and “Free” Time—

Especially during day long, off-site, or overnight activities, children will periodically not be engaged in a supervised activity. Supervision shall be maintained during transition times through the use of chaperones, hall monitors, and escorts to minimize the opportunity for security breach or child-on-child incidents.

The Director of Christian Education shall assess at what times and places additional duties are to be assigned to employees and volunteers to assure supervision of transition and free time.

Transportation of Children—

Transportation of children, whether on buses, motor coaches or private passenger vehicles, is a serious responsibility. Especially when utilizing rented or private vehicles of employees and volunteers, utmost care shall be taken in view of the risks associated with managing transportation.

The following standards shall apply:

1. No employee or volunteer shall transport a single child that is not his/her own, except as may be required in an emergency with the approval of a supervisor. Communications shall be established to verify the whereabouts, expected arrival and change of custody of the child.
2. Any driver operating a vehicle which holds 16 passengers or more, including the driver, shall possess a valid Commercial Driver License (CDL).
3. Any person who drives on behalf of FFPC sponsored programs shall be previously qualified under our transportation and driver qualification procedure. ([Appendix B – Applications & Forms](#))
4. Adult-child ratios shall be maintained and within the safe loading limits of the vehicles being used. If this cannot be maintained, parent consent will be obtained.
5. As practicable, mixed age groups are not to sit together.
6. Employees and volunteers are not to make unauthorized or unplanned stops.
7. All passengers are to be seated and to use safety belts as available.
8. Employees and volunteers are to be seated on larger vehicles in a way that permits them to supervise young passengers.
9. When passengers must disembark at a rest facility or destination, care shall be taken to obtain a headcount on arrival and departure.

Off-site Activities (Day Trips) —

Off-site activities require special additional planning, taking into account the nature of the destination and exposure to the public at large. For example, attendance at a public venue, such as an amusement park, will require greater supervision than a visit to a sister church. Due to the increased risk of a child becoming lost or injured during an off-site activity, extra care shall be taken to assure adequate supervision.

The following are minimum requirements:

1. All off-site activities shall be approved in advance by Director of Christian Education or Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff.
2. The trip leader shall provide a plan outlining transportation and supervision for the activity.
3. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained through our Parental Consent Form, and any other forms required by the activity. Destination information and group leader contact information will be provided to parents for each activity via email, text, or verbally as appropriate.
4. Each employee or volunteer shall be assigned to a specific group of children to supervise. Each employee or volunteer must then maintain a roll sheet listing all of the children in his or her group. Head counts and roll checks will be conducted routinely.
5. Standards for bathroom activities, transition time and transportation shall be maintained.
6. Parents/guardians shall be provided a means to make emergency contact with the trip leader.

Over-night Activities—

As with off-site activities, over-night activities present an even higher level of risk to children than day trips due to isolation from parents and the 24-hour supervision that is required throughout the activity. Camps generally have the experience and staffing to adopt different standards than these below. The assumption for the purpose of this standard is lodging at a public hotel in an unfamiliar city.

The following standards will apply in addition to standards for off-site activities:

1. All overnight activities, whether on the church site or not, shall have prior approval of Director of Christian Education, Minister(s)/Head-of-Staff or Session.
2. All overnight activities include a minimum of one adult chaperone representing each sex over 21 years of age.
3. All volunteers and employees under 18 years of age must be supervised at all times.
4. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained through our Parental Consent Form, and any other forms required by the activity. Destination information and group leader contact information will be provided to parents for each activity via email, text, or verbally as appropriate.
5. At all times through the night an employee or volunteer must remain on duty at a location to supervise the coming and going of any child and to assure safe evacuation during an emergency and to prevent children/youth sneaking out. (Maximum two hour watches through the night are recommended.)
6. Trip leaders or other designated adult shall conduct routine walk-throughs of high risk areas.
7. For the event of a building evacuation, an outdoor rally point will be designated in advance.
8. A roster will be maintained of the room assignments for each child/youth and adult.
9. A bed check will be conducted at a specific time known to all.
10. Adult-child ratios are to be maintained for outings away from the lodging site.
11. A daily schedule of events shall be maintained with supervisory duty assignments included.
12. Double-queen lodging is preferred at hotels, four to a room. Children/youth in each room will be of similar age and sex. No adult will share a bed with a child/youth, unless it is their child/youth.
13. Standards for bathroom, out-of-the-way, off limits locations and transition time shall be maintained as the site circumstances and facilities may require.