

Congregational Church of Pinehurst

895 Linden Rd
Pinehurst, NC 28374

Making Our Church Safe for Children and Youth, October 2018

In recent years it has become evident that church settings may be a place where children and youth are vulnerable to abuse by adults who claim ministerial authority and the cloak of spirituality. Of course, churches are not the only places where children may be vulnerable and there has been much policy work to prevent the abuse of children at schools, community centers, non-profit organizations, and all settings that serve children and youth. In response to an increasing awareness of children's vulnerability in ministerial settings, our call to care for children, the availability of resources, and the risks the church assumes when caring for children, the Council has decided to create a "Safe Church Policy Concerning the Care of Minors (Safe Church)."

Outline of Safe Church Policy Concerning the Care of Minors

- I. Policy Statement
- II. Supervision of Minors
- III. Discipline
- IV. Screening Procedures for Employment or Volunteerism
- V. Definitions
- VI. Procedures for reporting and handling complaints
- VII. Understanding and acceptance of Policy
- VIII. Forms – application form and background check form

I. Policy Statement

The Congregational Church of Pinehurst (CCP) is committed to providing a nurturing, safe environment for youth and children. We shall create an atmosphere free from all forms of abuse, including but not limited to physical and sexual abuse. The purpose of this policy is to assure the welfare of our children and youth and protect the staff and volunteers of CCP from potential allegations of physical or sexual abuse. In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child or youth will be surrounded by steadfast love and protection.

II. Supervision of Minors

1. Children and youth will be checked in to and out of church sponsored activities by their parent or legal guardian or people authorized by parent/legal guardian.
2. The window installed in the butterfly room shall remain unobstructed and the door to the office and conference rooms shall remain open during children and youth events. This will allow increased visibility and casual observations of all events.
3. Individuals teaching, supervising or caring for a child at the church or at a church-sponsored activity should NOT:
 - act or communicate with any child in a manner which could be viewed as sexual molestation or inappropriate behavior;

- physically strike a child or control a child in such a way as to bruise or inflict injury;
 - use abusive, inflammatory or discriminatory language in correcting a child;
 - leave any pre-school child unattended;
 - place sole supervisory responsibility for children or youth in an individual under the age of 18 years of age;
4. An individual with responsibility for children should protect other children from harm from a child who has become disruptive, disobedient or defiant on the premises or on a church-sponsored activity. If special action is required to control a disruptive child, the teacher, care giver or other responsible adult should inform the child's parent.

III. Discipline

When needed, discipline can be a positive experience for a child. Discipline is used to teach children self-control and respect for themselves and others. All those who work with minors at Congregational Church of Pinehurst (the "church") or on church-sponsored activities should use the disciplinary techniques described below. This policy is for the protection and benefit of the children as well as those who work with them.

1. *Praise and Positive Reinforcement.* When appropriate, cooperation and good behavior should be acknowledged and praised.
2. *Respect.* Children should always be treated with respect. There are no bad children, only bad behavior.
3. *Active Listening.* Children are more likely to behave well when they know that they are understood. It is a good practice for adults to try to state what they hear the child saying and help the child to identify his or her feelings so the child can begin to solve his or her problem and exhibit appropriate behavior.
4. *Modify Environment.* Efforts should be made to change an environment that seems to encourage undesirable behaviors and to seek an environment that encourages appropriate behaviors.
5. *Ignore.* Some behavioral problems stemming from the desire for attention can and should be ignored.
6. *Allow Consequences.* Where the child will not be endangered, it is appropriate for the child to be allowed to experience the consequences of his or her actions, in order to experience the feeling of having responsibility for those actions.
7. *Substitution.* Where possible, an acceptable activity should be substituted for an inappropriate one.
8. *Intervention.* Interventions should be used that are appropriate to an activity or behavior, and may range from a direct verbal response, to an indirect response such as a firm look in the child's direction, a touch on the shoulder, or sitting down beside him or her. The idea is to let the child know, with both firmness and kindness, that his or her behavior should be changed, halted, or redirected.

9. *Others.* Authority to discipline should never be delegated to another child, and a child should not be allowed to retaliate or reciprocate (e.g., bite another in return for being bitten / hit in return for being hit).
10. *Time Out.* A child occasionally may be separated from the group if their behavior continues after they have had sufficient warning, but not in a way that humiliates the child. It is preferable to give the child an alternate activity, such as a book to read, during the time of separation.
11. *Corporal Punishment.* Corporal punishment, including rough handling, verbal abuse (e.g., yelling), or confinement, should not be used.
12. *Parental Intervention.* Parents should be contacted as soon as possible when other reasonable efforts to resolve the problem have failed. It is up to parents to decide and perform any further disciplinary action. The child should be removed for the rest of the time period and participation in the scheduled activity time discussed.

IV. Screening Procedures for Employment or Volunteerism

1. Before beginning their duties, all employees and volunteers will submit a disclosure form and be personally interviewed to assess the suitability of their character and qualifications for the position they seek.
2. The church will conduct a registered sex offender review for each employee or volunteer who will be working with children by searching their name on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopr.gov. This registered sex offender review will be repeated on an annual basis for all such people.
3. Before beginning their duties, all prospective employees and volunteers will undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to inquiries of references and a criminal history verification by a third-party vendor. The pastor and worship and education team leader will be the only people to view the results of this screening. Depending on the results of the background check, the person also will engage in a course of action specified by the pastor and worship and education team leader which may include escorts when involved in church related activities, not being allowed to be alone with children, and the sharing of information with interested parties.
4. We expect that those who work with minors will have been members or regular attendees of the church for at least six months.
5. All volunteers and employees who regularly work with children and youth will receive orientation regarding safe church policy and procedures.

V. Definitions

Church Volunteer: a person authorized by the church to teach, supervise children or conduct / supervise children's activities. Church volunteers include elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, volunteers and Authorized Ministers.

Authorized Minister: a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ.

Abuse: any recent act of failure to act on the part of a church volunteer, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or which presents imminent risk of serious harm to a child.

- Physical abuse: any non-accidental physical injury to a child or the creation of substantial risk of harm to a child's health or welfare. Physical abuse can include striking, kicking, burning or biting, or acts which result in physical impairment.
- Sexual abuse: sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) with a child. Sexual abuse includes sexual exploitation which is the persuasion or coercion of any child to engage in sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct.
- Emotional abuse: injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of a child as evidenced by an observable or substantial change in behavior, emotional response or cognition.

Response Team: a team consisting of the Worship and Education Leader and two (2) other people (one male and one female) appointed by the church council. (If an allegation involving any member of the response team is made, this member will be replaced by the Pastor.)

VI. Procedures for reporting and handling complaints

1. A response team with no fewer than two members, one male and one female will be established by the council in preparation for the possibility of hearing concerns or complaints brought under the Safe Church Policy Concerning the Care of Minors. Anyone witnessing abuse may direct their complaint to the response team. The response team will familiarize itself with the policy as well as the procedures for response to concerns and complaints.
2. When information is received regarding alleged abuse or mistreatment of a child, the response team will immediately notify secular authorities and will cooperate fully in the investigation. These procedures will also be followed to determine whether the person under investigation will continue in their present position.
3. In addition to notifying secular authorities, when concerns are raised about an authorized minister of the United Church of Christ (ordained, commissioned or licensed), whether an employee or volunteer, the response committee will notify the Eastern North Carolina Association Minister of the United Church of Christ. Congregational Church of Pinehurst (CCP) will cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ related to ministerial authorization, while retaining the right and responsibility to make decisions regarding employment and volunteer ministries with CCP as it determines best.
4. The response team will make determinations and take appropriate actions to resolve any concerns or complaints. These may include:
 - a. Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment (or other serious misconduct covered by the policy) has occurred and that the appropriate body of the church is called upon to take action.
 - b. If secular authorities and the response team find that no abuse (or other infraction of policies) occurred, the response team may formally notify those who had a "need to know" and thus were previously notified of the concern and investigation.
5. A written summary of the safe church response team proceedings in such cases will be maintained.
6. In considering whether the reported conduct constitutes abuse, consideration shall be given to the record of the reported incident as a whole, and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the incident occurred.

7. Any person who brings a concern or complaint forward, or who assists in investigation of such a report, will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or employment, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.
8. If the person bringing the concern or complaint, or the accused person, is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the response team, he or she has the right to appeal to the pastor, who will refer the matter to the council for resolution.

VII. Understanding and Acceptance of Policies

1. Each individual who cares for, supervises, or otherwise has control over minors at the church or in connection with church-sponsored activities, especially but not limited to teachers and care givers for youth or children during regular care giving and Sunday school programs, must read and understand the above policies.
2. Each individual who cares for, supervises, or otherwise has control over minors at the church or in connection with church-sponsored activities should be interviewed by a member of the worship and education team to determine that these policies have been read and understood and that the individual is willing and able to follow the policies. Individuals with a history of child neglect, child physical abuse or child sexual abuse should not be allowed to supervise, teach or otherwise have control over minors at the church or in connection with church-sponsored activities.
3. All individuals working with children and youth as volunteers in the church's Sunday school program, including childcare, must have been members or regular attendees of the church for a minimum of six months.

Statement of Understanding and Compliance

I verify that I have read and understood the above policies for working with minors at Congregational Church of Pinehurst, and will comply with those policies. I verify also that I meet the criteria herein stated for caring for and supervising minors.

Signature_____

Date_____

VIII. Forms – application form and background check form:

**Congregational Church of Pinehurst
Employment/Authorized Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form**

NAME: *LAST* _____ *FIRST* _____ *MIDDLE* _____

ADDRESS: *STREET* _____ *CITY* _____ *STATE* _____ *ZIP CODE* _____

DAYTIME PHONE _____ **EVENING PHONE** _____

My previous experience in the past five years (paid or volunteer) related to the ministry I am seeking to fill includes:

1. AGENCY NAME: _____
ADDRESS: *STREET* _____ *CITY* _____ *STATE* _____ *ZIP CODE* _____

CONTACT PERSON: _____ **PHONE** _____

2. AGENCY NAME: _____
ADDRESS: *STREET* _____ *CITY* _____ *STATE* _____ *ZIP CODE* _____

CONTACT PERSON: _____ **PHONE** _____

3. AGENCY NAME: _____
ADDRESS: *STREET* _____ *CITY* _____ *STATE* _____ *ZIP CODE* _____

CONTACT PERSON: _____ **PHONE** _____

Name of church where I am currently a friend or member: _____

- I have been a member of this church since _____
- I have been a friend of this church since _____

I have never been found guilty, or pled guilty or no contest, to a criminal charge.

True Not true

If not true, give a short explanation of the charge. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the charge; where the charge was filed; and the precise disposition of the charge.) _____

No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.

True Not true

If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.) _____

I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct.

True Not true

If not true, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.) _____

Do you have a valid driver's license? Yes No

State where driver's license issued _____ Driver's license number _____

With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.

True Not true

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 or sanctioned volunteer positions 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 or volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize Congregational Church of Pinehurst and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding 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 and character. 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 made in good faith and without malice.

Congregational Church of Pinehurst's hiring and authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the distribution of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise the position I am seeking to fill. To that end, I authorize Congregational Church of Pinehurst and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these stated purposes. I understand that Congregational Church of Pinehurst will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

(SIGNATURE) _____ DATE _____