

Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church Child Protection Policy

I. Our Mission

Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church strives to provide a safe spiritual home through which we reach out to young people and welcome them into the body of Christ where they are encouraged to commit their lives to God as disciples of Jesus Christ while being nurtured in Christian living and inspired to lead and serve in the ministries of the church so that they may be sent into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ.

II. Purpose

At Mt. Pisgah, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of children and youth is vital. These policies are intended to protect the children and youth, as well as those who work with them during our ministry programs. They are also intended to help Mt. Pisgah reduce its legal risk and liability exposure. These policies will assist our congregation to provide a physically safe, emotionally secure, and spiritually nurturing environment for all who attend services or activities sponsored by Mt. Pisgah. These policies will apply to all who work with children and youth at Mt. Pisgah in ministry groups - staff and volunteer leaders/workers. They will also apply to church-sponsored groups and community groups who use our facilities. For our purpose, we define “children” as birth to age 18. We define “ministry groups” as those groupings which are a part of the Church Council programming and are led by staff or lay volunteers; “church-sponsored groups” as those which have a sponsorship agreement with the church, may or may not be led by lay volunteers, and are generally on-going in nature (i.e., Scouting groups); and “community groups” as those who have permission to use the church facilities, either for on-going or short-term activities, and may or may not involve church laity (i.e., Narcotics Anonymous). Hereinafter, we will refer to this document as the “Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church Child Protection Policy” or “this Policy”.

III. Biblical Foundation

Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church seeks to express God’s love of young persons and to provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to provide an environment that is caring and secure for all persons. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures, and ministries must stand.

And they were bringing children to Him, that he might touch them and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it He was indignant, and said to them, “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands upon them. (Mark 10:13-16).

Jesus teaches us explicitly that young persons have the right and the keys to the Kingdom of God. He demonstrated this through blessing and touch. Our goal in response to this Biblical mandate is to maintain a safe, secure and loving place where children may grow.

IV. The Law

Under Virginia Code §63.2-100, an “abused or neglected child” includes a child who is less than eighteen years of age, whose parents, or *other persons* responsible for his/her care create or inflict, or threaten to create or inflict, or allow to be created or inflicted upon such a child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death or disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions. Abuse and neglect also include the failure to provide care necessary for the health of a child, abandonment of a child, and committing or allowing sexual exploitation of a child. Child abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional, or mental, and may be the result of actions towards a child or omissions to act. (e.g., lack of care for a child.)

Virginia law requires certain persons in their professional and official capacity to report that a child is abused or neglected if they have reason to suspect it. Physicians, social workers, and probation officers are some examples. In addition, Virginia Code §63.2-1509 requires “[a]ny teacher or other person employed in a public or private school, kindergarten or nursery school” and “any person associated with or employed by any private organization responsible for the care, custody or control of children” to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Certainly, any person should report any known or reasonably suspected child abuse immediately.

By Virginia statute the person making the report is immune from civil or criminal liability or administrative penalty or sanction for making such a report, unless it is proven that such a person acted in bad faith or with malicious intent or purpose.

V. Types of Child Abuse

A. Definition

Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, care giver, or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical or mental health or welfare. The following definitions and explanations in this section are from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

B. Types of Abuse

1. Physical Abuse

A physical injury, threat of injury or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threats of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation, bone fracture, brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma,

burns, scalding, cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions, internal injuries, poisoning, sprains, dislocations, gunshot, stabbing wounds.

2. Physical Neglect

The failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food and malnutrition.

3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes any act defined in the code of Virginia which is committed, or allowed to be committed, upon a child by his/her parent or other persons responsible for the child's care. Examples of such abuse are: sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy, and other sexual abuse.

4. Medical Neglect

Refusal or failure by caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental, or dental care for a condition, which if untreated, could result in illness or developmental delays.

5. Failure to Thrive

A syndrome of infancy or early childhood which is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.

6. Mental Abuse/Neglect

A pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker which results in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.

7. Educational Neglect

The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.

8. Bizarre Discipline

Any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior.

VI. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

In an effort to create the safest possible environment for children and youth taking part in activities at Mt. Pisgah as well as sponsored activities at other locations, several abuse prevention measures will be utilized. These measures include criminal record checks on all paid staff and screening of volunteer leader/workers for past child abuse convictions, provisions for regular training on child abuse issues to staff and volunteer leaders/workers,

use of the six-month rule, two person rule and the five-year-older rule, standards of appropriate behavior and of discipline, and open classrooms. In this Policy, “staff” refers to all paid staff of the church, including the Nursery and Preschool staffs. “Volunteer leader/worker” refers to anyone working directly with children or youth in the capacity of teacher/classroom assistant, nursery worker, Sunday School teacher, shepherd, counselor, mentor, small-group facilitator, food provider, choir leader/assistant, chaperone, driver, and Scout leader/assistant. Mt. Pisgah Preschool will follow the state mandated guidelines set by the Department of Social Services in regard to child protection as well as any of the following policies not covered in the state guidelines. Scouting or other groups who have mandated child protection guidelines from their specific governing organizations will be expected to follow those guidelines as well as any of the following policies not covered in their governing organizations’ guidelines.

1. Six Month Rule

Mt. Pisgah will not use anyone as a volunteer leader/worker with children or youth ministries in the church unless such person has had continuous active involvement in the church for at least six (6) months.

- Persons who have not been actively involved for six months may be exempted from this rule upon the approval of a staff member following review of a completed background check. Each case will be determined individually.
- Persons not exempted may (after completion of background check) assist. This assistance will be only if they are paired with someone (other than their spouse or family member) who has been approved as a volunteer leader/worker.

2. Staff/Volunteer Screening

Before beginning the first opportunity to serve, each staff member and volunteer leader/worker working in ministry groups involving children or youth shall be required to sign an acknowledgement (hereinafter “the Acknowledgement and Certification”) that (a) he/she has received and read a copy of the Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church Child Protection Policy, (b) certifies he/she has never been found to have committed abuse or neglect of a child by a local department of social services in the Commonwealth of Virginia or found to have done so by a similar department or agency from another state, (c) certifies he/she has never been convicted of a felony, and (d) certifies that he/she has never been convicted of any felony or misdemeanor involving the abuse or neglect of a child. Additionally, each staff member and volunteer leader/worker will undergo a criminal record check made through the State Police Criminal History Record/Sex Offender And Crimes search (Form SP230) and a check through the Va. Department of Social Services - Child Protection Services Central Registry of Information search. The cost of this record check will be paid by Mt. Pisgah for church-related ministry programs and ministry groups. Church-sponsored and community groups who may use our facilities must pay for the record checks of their own staff, workers, and volunteers.

Thereafter, for re-screening purposes, each staff member and volunteer leader/worker shall be required to sign a new Acknowledgement and Certification annually and undergo another criminal record and social services check on the third anniversary of their previous criminal records and social services check. However, for those staff

members and volunteer leader/workers who initially signed the Acknowledgement and Certification and who had initially undergone a criminal record and social services check between August 1, 2009, and November 30, 2009, the Child Protection Committee (herein also referred to as "the Committee"), in its discretion, may require that those individual staff members and volunteer leader/workers undergo another criminal record and social services check on either their second, third, or fourth anniversary.

To maintain confidentiality, the results of the records checks shall be reviewed and maintained initially by Director of Youth/Young Adult Ministries. These results shall be kept and maintained in a secure location only accessible by the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor, Director of Youth/Young Adult Ministries, and the Director of Children's Ministries. To the extent necessary for the Child Protection Committee to consider any application or to reconsider any application as described herein, those results shall be shared with the committee.

The following persons shall be prohibited from working with, supervising, or in any way caring for any children or youth of Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in any activity, event, ministry, or function of the church:

- Those persons who refuse to sign the Acknowledgement and Certification.
- Those persons whose Acknowledgement and Certification or records check reveal a conviction of a felony or misdemeanor involving the abuse or neglect of a child.
- Those persons whose Acknowledgement and Certification or records check reveal a conviction for any felony.
- Those persons whose Acknowledgement and Certification or records check reveal that person having been found to have committed abuse or neglect of a child by a local department of social services in the Commonwealth of Virginia or similar finding from another state.

Any person who is prohibited from working with, supervising, or in any way caring for any children or youth of Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in any activity, event, ministry, or function of the church based upon a conviction of a felony (except for a conviction of a felony involving the abuse or neglect of a child), shall be notified by the Director of Youth/Young Adult Ministries or the Director of Children's Ministries of such disqualification and prohibition. The person disqualified (except for a person convicted of a felony involving the abuse or neglect of a child) may request the Child Protection Committee to reconsider his/her application. The Child Protection Committee shall then investigate and reconsider the request and may grant an exception to the rule cited above upon any conditions it deems appropriate.

If a person's Acknowledgement and Certification or records check reveal a conviction for any misdemeanor (except for a conviction of a felony involving the abuse or neglect of a child), then the Child Protection Committee shall conduct an investigation to determine whether he/she shall be approved to work with, supervise, or in any way care for any children or youth of Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in any activity, event, ministry, or function of the church. If the Committee deems the applicant to be disqualified, the Director of Youth/Young Adult Ministries or the Director of Children's

Ministries shall notify the applicant of the Committee's decision at which time the disqualified applicant may request the Child Protection Committee to reconsider his/her application. The Child Protection Committee shall then further investigate and reconsider the request and may allow the applicant to work with, supervise, or care for any children or youth of Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in any activity, event, ministry, or function of the church upon any conditions it deems appropriate. In no event, however, shall a person who has been convicted of a misdemeanor involving the abuse or neglect of a child be allowed to work with, supervise, or in any way care for any children or youth of Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in any activity, event, ministry, or function of the church.

The Child Protection Committee reserves the right after a thorough investigation prompted by the disclosures in the Acknowledgement and Certification, the results of the records check, or any other information it may receive, to prohibit any applicant from working with, supervising, or in any way caring for any children or youth of Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in any activity, event, ministry, or function of the church.

All community groups and church-sponsored groups who work with, supervise, or care for any children shall be subject to, and shall adhere to, this Policy. Likewise, all other persons, groups, companies, associations, or other organizations who are not ministry groups, church-sponsored groups, and/or community groups of Mount Pisgah, as defined in Subsection II, but who provide services, entertainment, or in any way work with, supervise, or care for any children or youth as part of any ministry group or church-sponsored group of Mount Pisgah, shall be subject to, and shall adhere to, this Policy. For purposes of this Policy, these persons, groups, companies, associations, or other organizations shall be referred to as an "Outside Organization".

a. Prior to a community group, church-sponsored group, or Outside Organization using Mount Pisgah's facilities or providing any type of service to a Mount Pisgah ministry group or church-sponsored group, children or youth activity, the Mount Pisgah's Child Protection Committee shall provide the community group, church-sponsored group, or Outside Organization with a copy of this Policy and a representative of the community group, church-sponsored group or Outside Organization shall execute an acknowledgement on behalf of the community group, church-sponsored group, and/or Outside Organization stating it has received a copy of this Policy and shall abide by its terms and conditions.

b. Additionally, prior to a community group, church-sponsored group, or Outside Organization using Mount Pisgah's facilities or providing any type of service to a Mount Pisgah children or youth ministry group activity or function, it shall provide the Mount Pisgah Child Protection Committee with a copy of its policy regarding criminal background checks and screening of its members or employees. If the Mount Pisgah Child Protection Committee is satisfied that the community group's, church-sponsored group's, or Outside Organization's policy regarding criminal background checks and screening of its members or employees meets or exceeds the protections afforded by these guidelines, then the Mount Pisgah Child Protection Committee shall so advise

the community group, church-sponsored group, or Outside Organization in writing at which time the community group, church-sponsored group, or Outside Organization shall provide the Mount Pisgah Child Protection Committee with a list of all members and employees who have met its policy standard. Only those persons shall be allowed to work with, supervise, or care for children and youth at a community group, church-sponsored group, or Outside Organization event or function or work with, supervise, or care for children or youth of a Mount Pisgah ministry group or church-sponsored group event or activity. If the Mount Pisgah Child Protection Committee is not satisfied that the community group's, church-sponsored group's, or Outside Organization's policy regarding criminal background checks and screening of its members or employees meets or exceeds the protections afforded by this Policy, then the Mount Pisgah Child Protection Committee shall have individuals screened from those groups and organizations who shall be working with, supervising, or caring for children and youth at the group's or organization's expense. Only those persons whose criminal and background checks meet the standards set forth in this Policy shall be permitted to work with, supervise, or care for children and youth using Mount Pisgah's facilities or to provide any type of service to a Mount Pisgah children or youth ministry group activity or function

c. If any community group, church-sponsored group, or Outside Organization, as defined in this Policy, is currently using Mount Pisgah's facilities, providing services, or otherwise working with, supervising, or caring for children and youth at the time this Policy are approved by the Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church Council, it shall have six months to comply.

d. All community groups, church-sponsored groups, and Outside Organizations are subject to having their policies for criminal background checks and screening of its members or employees reviewed by the Child Protection Committee annually and shall be required to update their list of members and employees who have met its policy standard at that time and at any other time as required by the Child Protection Committee.

3. Staff/Volunteer Training

- All staff members and volunteer leaders/workers will be required to read this Policy and sign a form indicating that they have read and understand the policy and agree to abide by it. Additionally, at any time this Policy is amended or modified, all staff members and volunteer leaders/workers shall sign a form indicating they read and understand same. Anyone failing to do so will be contacted. If the form is not returned and signed following the contact, the individual will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and the form signed.
- First year staff and volunteer leaders/workers will be required to attend one training session related to the church's abuse policy during the course of their first year of service. These training sessions will be offered by the church, conducted by staff and/or members of the Child Protection Committee, and held at various times throughout the year.
- Subject to the program director's discretion, any short-term volunteers (i.e., substitutes, local carpool drivers, VBS workers) or those called on at short notice to

assist in a one-time activity will be required to read the Overview of Mt. Pisgah UMC Child Protection Policy and sign the acknowledgment form before the start of the activity. These persons must be paired with at least one other person who has completed the staff and volunteer screening as required in subsection 2 above.

4. Two Adult Rule

The two adult rule accomplishes several important objectives: reduces the risk of injury, provides an appropriate adult/child ratio, reduces the risk of child abuse, and reduces the risk of unfounded claims of abuse.

- All classes, activities, nurseries, babysitting, childcare, meetings, events, practices, and other groupings of children or youth which are offered by any ministry group, church-sponsored group, community group, and Outside Organization shall be staffed and supervised by at least two adults who have been screened and approved as required in Subsection 2 above. Brief bathroom visits or diaper changing which result in one adult supervising a group of children and/or a child is specifically permitted.
- Any ministry group or church-sponsored group that leaves the premises must have two or more adult leaders present and must include at least one male and one female adult if the group is mixed in gender. This also applies to any group that stays overnight at the church.
 - During overnights, whether at the church or another location, sleeping arrangements for groups of middle school youth and older must be segregated by gender and properly supervised. At no time should sleeping arrangements consist of 1 adult in a room with youth or 1 youth in a room with adults.
 - When traveling as a group, only one adult is required in each vehicle with youth or children. At no time should travel arrangements consist of one adult in a vehicle with only one child/youth. All vehicles should travel together in a caravan; no vehicle should leave the group caravan except in an emergency.
- If an emergency or other unexpected event causes only one properly screened adult to be staffing and supervising any class, activity, nursery, babysitting, childcare, meeting, event, practice, or other grouping of children or youth which is being offered by any ministry group, church-sponsored group, community group, and Outside Organization, then all reasonable efforts shall be made to find a second properly screened adult for the grouping of children or youth, or to combine the group of children with another in order to make possible the presence of two properly screened adults.
- If there is any possibility that children/youth will be in groups with only one adult at some time during the course of an event, if at all possible, the staff and/or volunteer leader/worker will notify parents in advance.

5. Five -Year-Older Rule

Adult staff or volunteer leader/workers who will be working with youth shall be:

- at least 23 years old if working with Senior High Youth and
- at least 20 years old if working with Middle School Youth and elementary aged children.
- If an adult (18 years and up) who does not meet the five-year-older-rule wishes to work with children/youth, they must complete the staff/volunteer screening process. They may be allowed to work with children/youth ministries on the recommendation of the Child Protection Committee following a review of this process. Each case will be determined individually. They will be paired with a screened adult who does meet the five-year-older-rule. They cannot be alone with children/youth.

6. Providing Exemplary Leadership

- All staff and volunteer leaders/workers are to model the love of Christ while leading children and youth and avoid behavior which may be misconstrued as negative or inappropriate. This is needed to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.
- No staff or volunteer leader/worker with youth is to date or be romantically or sexually involved with a youth. There are no exceptions to this Policy.
- Any adult staff or volunteer leader/worker counseling a child or youth should do so in a public or semi-public place in view of others. Ministerial offices may be used if these rooms have uncovered windows in the doors or beside the doors. Whenever possible, females should counsel females and males should counsel males.
- There are limits to confidentiality when working with children and youth. Staff and volunteer leaders/workers must report to the Senior Minister if a minor discusses harming him/herself or others, or being abused. Conferring with a minister on these issues is not considered breaking a confidence.

7. Discipline

All staff and volunteer leaders/workers with children and youth will use the following disciplinary measures.

- If behavior is inappropriate, the staff or volunteer leader/worker will tell the child/youth specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is.
- With children, if this measure is not effective the child will be guided to another activity. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be guided to a table or area in the room to work alone away from the other students.
- If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be taken to the staff or volunteer leader/worker in charge of the activity and left under his/her supervision as long as they remain in the presence of others.
- If the behavior continues and/or is dangerous to the child or to others, the parents/guardians will be called to pick the child up immediately. When isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the child's parents/guardians as soon as possible.

- At no time may a child be left alone in the hallway or in any area of the building as a means of discipline.
- With youth, if the above measure is not effective the youth will be asked to remove themselves from the activity to discuss the inappropriate behavior and the accepted behavior with the staff or volunteer leader/worker, remaining in the same room or in the presence of others. If the inappropriate behavior continues or endangers the individual youth or others, the youth will be escorted to the staff or volunteer leader/worker in charge of the activity, remaining in the presence of others, and the youth will call his/her parents to pick them up immediately. The youth will relate to their parents the reason for this disciplinary action upon their arrival. At no time may a youth be left alone in any area of the building as a means of discipline.
- No physical or verbal abuse, e.g., shouting or ridicule, is to be used at any time.

8. Open Classrooms

- Nursery rooms, children and youth classrooms and activity areas must have either doors with clear windows in them or a window in the wall next to the door. These windows may at no time be covered. The windows next to the doors in the children's division must be free from paper and items sitting in front of the windows from the floor level up to five (5) feet at all times. If children or youth are in a room without such windows, the door must remain open at all times.
- Classroom furniture must be arranged openly so that the entire classroom can be seen from the door windows or the open doorway.
- Nursery rooms, classrooms and activity rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteers at any time.

9. Failure to Follow This Policy

The Child Protection Committee will be responsible for reviewing any allegation of disregarding these guidelines whether the claim be against staff or volunteer leader/worker. Volunteer leaders/workers who disregard these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved from duty at the discretion of the Child Protection Committee. Staff members who disregard these guidelines will be reported and referred to the Staff-Parish Relations Committee by the Child Protection Committee.

VII. Reporting Child Abuse

Should there be an allegation of child abuse at Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. Any allegation of child abuse shall be taken seriously.
2. If a physical or sexual violation is witnessed or has just occurred and is reported, the staff or volunteer leader/worker in charge shall immediately contact the police and the Department of Social Services. If a staff person is not present, after calling the police and the Department of Social Services, the volunteer leader/worker should contact the Sr. Pastor or any other staff member. That staff person will immediately contact a member of

the Child Protection Committee. If the volunteer leader/worker should not be able to reach a staff member, they should contact a member of the Child Protection Committee. These numbers will be accessible to all leaders.

3. Pray for the church and all persons affected by the allegations.

4. In handling the allegation, immediately begin documenting all procedures.

5. In any type of allegation, immediately notify the staff member involved with the activity or the Sr. Pastor and that staff member will notify a member of the Child Protection Committee of the substance of the allegations, unless the allegations involve the Sr. Pastor or the staff member. If the staff person or the Sr. Pastor is involved in the allegation or the staff person or Sr. Pastor cannot be reached, a member of the Child Protection Committee should be contacted. As many members of the Committee as are immediately accessible shall be convened either in person or by telephone and the allegations shall be evaluated initially to determine whether there is a reason to suspect that child abuse may have occurred. To maintain confidentiality, information given to the committee shall not include the names of either the alleged victim or the accused; only the situation. The function of the Committee at this stage is not to conduct an investigation, but to determine, based upon the allegations and the information then in the possession of the Committee whether a reason to suspect exists. In making such a determination, the Committee shall avail itself of such counsel as it deems necessary and as is immediately available, including, but not limited to an anonymous consultation with the Va. Department of Social Services, consultation with an attorney, with a representative of the church's insurance company, and with the district superintendent.

a. If the allegations involve the Sr. Pastor, the Chairperson of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee shall be notified immediately and he/she shall immediately notify the district superintendent who shall direct the next steps taken by the church in responding to the allegations. The provisions of these guidelines shall continue to apply except as the district superintendent directs that other steps be taken.

6. If the Child Protection Committee determines that there is a reason to suspect that child abuse may have occurred, then the following steps shall be taken:

a. Immediately notify the Virginia Department of Social Services of the allegation;

b. Immediately notify the parents if it is not known that they have previous knowledge, unless the allegation is against them;

c. Immediately notify the church's insurance company; and

d. Immediately notify the district superintendent.

7. Do not confront the accused with the allegation. If the accused has assigned duties within the church and the Child Protection Committee determines that the steps outlined in paragraph six (6) above are appropriate, that person must be temporarily relieved of their duties until the investigation is concluded.

8. The Sr. Pastor should extend whatever care and resources are necessary to those impacted by the allegation, but under no circumstances should the Sr. Pastor or other staff or any church leader or member investigate the allegation. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the Sr. Pastor, other staff, or church leader, should under no circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation which could contaminate the investigation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or refuting the allegation.

9. It is appropriate to show care and comfort for the alleged victim. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received or otherwise made known.

10. All persons involved shall observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused, except for communications with the Committee, the Sr. Pastor, law enforcement, and the appropriate department of social services, until advised to the contrary by the Child Protection Committee.

11. There shall be a single spokesperson for the church who shall be designated by the Child Protection Committee.

VIII. Child Protection Committee/Policy Review

The Charge Conference, upon nomination by the Lay Leadership Branch, shall annually elect a Child Protection Committee. The membership of the Child Protection Committee shall include the Sr. Minister, Pre-School Director, Director of Children's Ministries, and Director of Youth Ministries as Ex-Officio members and not less than two (2) or more than four (4) members of the church. The Child Protection Committee shall at least annually review and propose any revisions to this Policy, and shall be responsible for the administration and interpretations of this Policy. Any changes to these guidelines and policies proposed by the Child Protection Committee shall not take effect until approved by Church Council. In as much as some work of this Committee will be confidential, members of the Committee must be able to uphold strict rules of confidentiality.

Approved by Church Council on March 22, 2010