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CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

We affirm that all children are a gift of God, created by God and created good.

We believe that all children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that may not always value children;

We hope for a world where all children can find a safe place; where all ages, races, genders, creeds and abilities are recognized, valued, and celebrated;

Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in His name, and Jesus lifted up a child as an example of what the realm of God is like;

Therefore, we hope for a church where our baptismal vow to nurture all children committed to our care is taken seriously.

POLICY PURPOSE

To protect children/youth in our care from child abuse, neglect and/or sexual misconduct.

To protect our staff and volunteers from false accusations of child abuse, neglect and/or sexual misconduct.

To safeguard the ministry of the church and to spare it from the devastation that may result from false accusations and litigation.

All portions of this policy apply to children/youth under 18 years of age as well as developmentally delayed adults. (Hereafter, the term “child” is meant to include both child and developmentally delayed adult.)

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

“Abuse” or “abused child” means that a person causes or inflicts abuse on a child under the age of 18, or has care, custody or control of a child under the age of 18 and causes or inflicts: (a) physical injury through unjustified force (force that is not reasonable or moderate and does not meet the other criteria in *11 Del. C. § 468*; (b) emotional abuse; (c) torture; (d) exploitation; or (e) maltreatment or mistreatment. See additional definitions in *10 Del. C. § 901. (1)*. “Neglect or “neglected child” means that a person is responsible for the care, custody and/or control of the child and has the ability and financial means to provide for the care of the child and: (a) fails to provide necessary care for food, clothing, shelter, education, health and medical or other care; or (b) chronically and severely abuses alcohol or a controlled substance; or (c) fails to provide necessary supervision appropriate for a child. See additional definitions in *10 Del. C. § 901 (18)*.

Sexual abuse of a child is criminal behavior that involves a child in sexual behavior (both touching and non-touching) for which the child is not personally, socially, or developmentally ready. See full definitions and criminal offenses in *11 Del. C. § 761-778A*.

RECOGNIZING THE SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE

Bruises in the pattern of an adult hand or fist, broken bones, tenderness in the upper arm and neck from shaking, cuts, and burn or bite marks can all be symptoms of physical abuse. The physically abused child may show consistent patterns of flinching when being corrected, as if anticipating a blow.

A child who has been the target of sexual or other abuse is very frequently made by the abuser to assume responsibility for the abuser’s actions. Depending on the age of the child, he or she may be unable or unwilling to talk about the abuse, but can still send distress messages. Distress messages can appear as disorders in eating or sleeping; exhibiting knowledge of sexual activity, or engaging in sexual activity inappropriate for their age and/or situation; showing symptoms of tenderness or bleeding; unusual extremes of body modesty; or recurring toilet problems.

PRECAUTIONS AND DUE DILIGENCE

Although our Christian concern for children/youth is heightened when any form of child abuse takes place anywhere, Concord’s focus is to prevent abuse of a child/youth from occurring within any of Concord’s programs or ministries through the establishment of a sound child/youth protection policy and the training of our staff and volunteers in that policy. This policy is intended to help our congregation as much as possible to make Concord a safe and caring place for our children and youth.

Recognizing that Concord has limited staff and relies upon volunteers for assisting in Spiritual Formation and other programs and ministries, there may be times when an unforeseen or emergency situation beyond Concord’s control (e.g. sickness or other unavailability of a member of staff or volunteer) results in an inability

to follow the stated policy in some respect. In such circumstances, Concord will use its best efforts to meet the requirements of the policy as far as practicable.

In an effort to create a safe environment within our church and beyond, each member of staff and each volunteer who works with Concord's children/youth programs both regularly and occasionally, on or beyond church property, will be screened and trained in this child/youth protection policy. Helpers (volunteer assistants under age 18) who are children of a Concord member or who are known to a staff or church member may serve as a volunteer under the supervision of a member of staff or an adult volunteer.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE POLICY

The Session shall be responsible for the administration of this policy. The Session has assigned oversight of this policy to the Spiritual Formation and Staff Relations Committees of Session.

PREVENTION

Concord has established the following policies and practices to lessen the likelihood of child abuse and neglect occurring.

SCREENING

Staff and adult volunteers that regularly have contact with children/youth under the age of 18 through Concord's programs and ministries **will be required** to have a background check pursuant to *11 Del. C. § 8561* and to execute a Volunteer Covenant (Appendix B) and a Pledge to Prohibit Abuse (Appendix C). The information provided for and obtained from the background check will be confidential and kept in a secure place. Only those authorized to conduct the screening process, Head of Staff, and the Chair of Staff Relations, if required, will be privy to this information. In the event of a result showing an allegation of child/youth abuse or neglect, the information may be divulged to other church leaders on a "need-to-know" basis. Re-screening of staff and adult volunteers may occur as determined by the Spiritual Formation Committee of the Session.

Staff and adult volunteers serving Concord's child/youth programs and ministries shall be required to acknowledge that they have read, understand and agree to abide by this policy.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN/YOUTH

Open Door Policy: Parents, volunteers, members, or staff of the church may visit and observe child or youth programs at any time.

Security measures for dropping off and picking up children: Concord has established measures for the security of children in our care:

- Parents are required to fill out an emergency form regarding their child including allergies, special instructions, and alternate people who may pick up their child. See Appendix D.
- Sunday School: Children and youth accompany Concord teachers/helpers from worship to the appropriate Sunday School rooms. Children are picked up by a parent at the classroom or escorted back to the sanctuary by a volunteer.
- Other Concord youth activities, such as VBS, will require a permitted adult to sign their child in/out. The forms for these additional youth programs will be kept by the Director of Children and Youth Ministries. A designated person will make sure that each child/youth is signed in and signed out by a permitted adult.
- Youth in grades 6 and up, as well as VBS counselors (age 10 and up) and a parent/guardian will be required to read and sign a Code of Conduct before attending youth activities in an academic year. See Appendix F.

Supervision of children and youth activities: Two members of staff or volunteers (2 adults or 1 adult, 1 helper) should be present in any room with children ages 0-11 years. (Rule of 3) When there are children/youth (age 12 and up) and adults present in the same room, there should be a minimum of three persons present (two adults and one child/youth, or one adult and two children/youth.)

A corollary of this rule is that at any time that an adult is having a private conversation with a child/youth (e.g. during a confirmation retreat where a pastor is discussing a youth's spiritual journey), it should only take place in an area with other adults/youth/children nearby. If this is not feasible, then the door to the room shall remain open to allow easy viewing. Small windows should be present in classrooms and office doors to allow easy viewing of all activities.

Bathroom Procedures for Children through second grade: Adults or helpers should bring at least two children/youth to the bathroom at a time. When an adult or helper accompanies children to the bathroom they should wait at the door until each child exits and then accompany them back to the classroom. The adult or helper may enter the bathroom, but only if a child needs assistance or supervision. The adult or helper shall not enter the stall with a child unless the child asks for or clearly needs assistance, or there is an emergency, and under such circumstances, the stall door shall remain open. **The outside bathroom door must be kept ajar when the adult or helper is inside with a child.** All children shall be kept together until everyone has used the facilities, and then all should leave as a group.

Parental Permission Rule: Children/youth must have written permission from their parent/legal guardian for involvement in church-sponsored programs and activities away from Concord's property. See Appendix D
Children up through 5th grade must have a parent/guardian present during such programs.

Trips and Retreat: There shall be at least two adults present for all trips, retreats, and other times that children/youth gather at or away from the church property. (At least three adults are preferable so that in the event of an emergency, there will be adequate supervision.) Parents shall be made aware of the housing accommodations and adult supervision in advance.

The person in charge of each trip and/or retreat shall carry completed permission slips, including permission for emergency medical care and information how to contact a parent/legal guardian in an emergency. See Appendix E.

Transportation: The following rules apply when transportation by a member of staff or an adult volunteer is being provided for children/youth for designated church activities from the church to a church-sponsored event and back:

The designated leader of the event must know the driver.

The designated leader of the event shall not permit any adult to drive who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The driver must be at least 21 years of age.

The driver must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated. The leader of the event shall visually check driver's licenses before leaving the premises.

The driver must have proof of insurance. The leader of the event shall visually check the driver's insurance card.

The driver must be accompanied by at least two children/youth in the vehicle.

The driver shall comply with all motor vehicle laws.

All drivers shall be advised that in the event of an accident, by insurance rules and their agreement to drive on a church-sponsored activity, the driver's insurance coverage is considered primary and that Concord's coverage is secondary.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF PERSONS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH

Concord shall provide periodic training (no longer than 5 years between trainings or as determined by the Spiritual Formation Committee) to members of staff and adult volunteers on this policy and any other current issues related to the protection of children/youth. Attendance at such training sessions is **required** for those who have direct contact with children/youth in Concord's ministry. Proof of outside training certifications can be provided for consideration/approval (*i.e. teachers can show evidence of similar training completion*)

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING ABUSE/NEGLECT OF CHILDREN/YOUTH

WHEN ABUSE /NEGLECT BY A PERSON OUTSIDE CONCORD IS SUSPECTED:

The care and safety of the victim and family is our first priority

A member of staff or a volunteer is encouraged to discuss areas of concern about possible abuse/neglect of a child/youth with pastoral staff at any time. The pastoral staff should be shown any physical signs of abuse/neglect of a child/youth within 24 hours, if possible. If there is a suspicion of abuse/neglect of a child/youth, it shall be reported to the Head of Staff, the Director of Children and Youth Ministries, or the Chair of the Spiritual Formation Committee.

An immediate oral report shall be made to the Department of Services of Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF) by telephone (1-800-292-9582) or otherwise. (*16 Del. C. § 903-905*) A written report, if requested, shall be made in accordance with the rules and regulations of DSCYF. Concord shall not attempt to conduct an investigation after reporting to DSCYF. This will be done by DSCYF and other professionals who are familiar with the required procedures.

The parent(s) or legal guardian of the victim shall be notified by the Head of Staff and/or The Director of Children and Youth Ministries and steps shall be taken to assure the safety of the child/youth until the parent(s) or legal guardian arrives. It is important to emphasize that DSCYF **must** be notified even if the parent(s) or legal guardian does not want the incident to be reported. If one or both parents is the alleged abuser, DSCYF shall be contacted and questioned whether or when the parent(s) should be notified, and Concord should follow DSCYF's advice.

WHEN ABUSE/NEGLECT BY A MEMBER OF STAFF OR A VOLUNTEER IS SUSPECTED:

The care and safety of the victim and family is our first priority.

Anyone who suspects abuse/neglect by a member of staff or a volunteer **must** report such information to a member of the pastoral staff. If possible, the member of the pastoral staff should be shown the physical signs of abuse/neglect within 24 hours. If there is suspicion of abuse/neglect, it must be reported to the Head of Staff, The Director of Children and Youth Ministries, and the Chairs of Staff Relations and Spiritual Formation

An immediate oral report shall be made to the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (DSCYF) by telephone (1-800-292-9582) or otherwise. (*16 Del. C. § 903-905*) A written report, if requested, shall be made in accordance with the rules and regulations of DSCYF. Concord shall not attempt to conduct an investigation after reporting to DSCYF. This will be done by DSCYF and other professionals who are familiar with the required procedures.

The parent(s) or legal guardian of the victim shall be notified by the Head of Staff and/or The Director of Children and Youth Ministries and steps shall be taken to assure the safety of the child/youth until the parent(s) or legal guardian arrives. It is important to emphasize that DSCYF **must** be notified even if the parent(s) or legal guardian does not want the incident to be reported.

As soon as the parent(s) or legal guardian has been notified, the Head of Staff shall inform the accused abuser that a report has been made. The accused member of staff or volunteer shall be temporarily relieved of his/her duties pending investigation of the charges. If a member of staff has been accused, a decision will be made to either maintain or suspend his/her salary and benefits until the allegations are cleared or substantiated. Concord will cooperate fully with all legal requirements under the law. Any contact with the media should only be handled by a pre-determined spokesperson (Clerk of Session). These matters are confidential and care shall be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The media spokesperson generally should report that the matter is under investigation and until concluded, no comment is appropriate. See Appendix A for Concord's current statement.

Concord's insurance company shall be notified immediately to protect and preserve coverage under the insurance policy.

A report of the abuse/neglect should be documented in writing and provided to the Head of Staff, Director of Children and Youth Ministries and the Chairs of Spiritual Formation and Staff Relations and given to the Clerk of Session.

FAILURE TO REPORT

Under Delaware law, failure to report suspected child/youth abuse/neglect (see definitions on page 2 of this policy) shall result in a civil penalty not to exceed \$10,000 for a first violation. *(16 Del. C. § 914)* A family or professional relationship will not relieve a person of the obligation to report suspected child/youth abuse/neglect. *(16 Del. C. § 908)*

PROTECTION OF PERSONS MAKING A REPORT

Under Delaware law, anyone participating in good faith in the making of a report of actual or suspected child/youth abuse/neglect shall have immunity from civil or criminal liability. *(16 Del. C. § 908)*

DISCIPLINE

No Violation: If an investigation of a report of child/youth abuse/neglect reveals that no abuse/neglect occurred, the accused member of staff or volunteer and the complaining party will be informed that a thorough investigation has been conducted and that there is no basis to substantiate the report. The member of staff shall be reinstated in good standing including restoration of salary and benefits if suspended during the investigation.

Violation by a staff member: If an investigation of a report of child/youth abuse/neglect results in a substantiation of abuse/neglect by a staff member, that person will be subject to immediate termination. The member of staff may appeal such action to the *Session*. After review, the decision of the Session is binding.

Violation by a volunteer: If an investigation of a report of child/youth abuse/neglect results in a substantiation of abuse/neglect by a volunteer, that volunteer shall be prohibited from working directly with children/youth in any of Concord's ministries and can be subject to other appropriate sanctions.

See Appendix A for "Statement to be Issued after an Alleged Incident of Abuse Becomes Public."

APPENDIX A

STATEMENT TO BE ISSUED AFTER AN ALLEGED INCIDENT OF ABUSE BECOMES PUBLIC

It is the policy of Concord Presbyterian Church that any type of abuse of children and adults, including sexual and physical abuse, will not be tolerated. In furtherance of this policy, Concord has taken steps to prevent the occurrence of such behavior through education and training programs, screening processes, supervision, and through reporting any claims of such behavior to appropriate authorities with the State of Delaware. Concord Church has established these written procedures, recognizing that abuse can occur in any setting.

It is the policy of Concord Presbyterian Church to cooperate with any investigation by civil and criminal authorities of any allegations of abuse. As Christians, those associated with the Church will attempt to provide appropriate support to all of its members, including those making allegations of abuse as well as those charged with abuse.

Concord Church's policies require that any individual charged with abuse, regardless of the church's opinions as to the validity of those charges, will be removed from work with children, and youth.

The church does not wish to avoid consideration of unpleasant circumstances or keep behavior which is unacceptable hidden from the public. However, Concord Church will not pre-judge any individual, and its agents are not permitted to discuss facts surrounding any incident which is the subject of a criminal or civil investigation. Concord Church continues in its commitment to avoid any incidents of abuse by individuals in the course of their activities for the Church and its members.

APPENDIX B

CONCORD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH VOLUNTEER COVENANT

We affirm that all children are a gift of God, created by God and created good;

We believe that all children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that does not always value children;

We hope for a world where all children can find a safe place; where all ages, races, genders, creeds and abilities are recognized, valued and celebrated;

Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in His name, and Jesus lifted up a child as an example of what the realm of God is like;

Therefore, we hope for a church where we take seriously our baptismal vow to nurture all children committed to our care.

As a Concord Presbyterian Church volunteer who works with children and youth, I covenant to honor this vision at all times and in all places.

Specifically, I will:

Treat everyone with respect, patience, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.

Be knowledgeable of and adhere to Concord’s Child/Youth Protection Policy

Report suspected abuse or neglect to the pastor, the Director of Children and Youth Ministries, the Chair of Spiritual Formation or the Chair of Staff Relations and to the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (DSCYF). I understand that under Delaware law, failure to report suspected abuse or neglect to DSCYF may result in a civil penalty of up to \$10,000.

I will not:

Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children/youth.

Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.

Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.

Touch a child/youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.

Use physical discipline for behavior management or any discipline that humiliates or demeans children/youth.

Print name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

**Pledge to Prohibit Abuse**

I have read and understand Concord Presbyterian Church's Child Protection Policies which will not tolerate any type of abuse against a child or other individual to include, but not limited to, sexual or physical abuse.

As a person working with children or youth, I pledge to be an advocate for those children and to uphold the policies of Concord Presbyterian Church to the best of my ability.

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

APPENDIX D



CHILD/YOUTH EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Child's Name _____ Gender ____ Birthday _____

Allergies _____

Basic Information:

Mother/Guardian's Name _____

Father/Guardian's Name _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

E-mail Address: _____

Address _____

Additional people who may pick up your child:

Special instructions:

APPENDIX E



Concord Youth Group Retreat/Trip Permission Form

I, _____, give my child, _____,
(Parent name) (Youth name)

permission to participate in trips and retreats with the Concord Presbyterian Youth Group during the _____ academic year. These trips may include traveling by van or car, for day or overnight trips.

I give permission to the director (Christina Pressley) and adult mentors of Concord Presbyterian Youth Group to make whatever emergency measures (ie: first aid, disaster evacuation) are judged necessary for the care and protection of my child while under the supervision of the Youth Group.

In case of a medical emergency, I understand that my child will be transported to the nearest care facility by the local emergency unit for treatment if the local emergency resource (police, rescue squad) deems it necessary. It is understood that in some medical situations the director and/or adult mentors will need to contact the local emergency resource before contacting the parent, child’s physician, and/or other adults acting on the parent’s behalf.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F



CONCORD YOUTH GROUP CODE OF CONDUCT

Recognizing that we are ambassadors of Christ and Concord Church and, as such, our actions and words provide either a good or bad example, each young person participating in Concord youth activities of any sort is expected to abide by the following Code of Conduct. This includes church members, regular attendees, and visitors. Above all, remember that your words and actions should reflect Christ.

By participating in Concord's youth activities, you represent Christ, this Church, your parents, and yourself. What you say and do affects those around you, and our hope is that individually, and as a group, we have a positive effect on others. With that in mind, we expect the following:

- During youth activities, participants will show respect by listening to others and not causing disruptions.
- In order for youth to participate fully, the use of cell phones and similar electronic devices during activities will not be allowed unless it is for an approved use.
- When participating in youth activities, youth will not leave prematurely before the activities or events conclude unless they have sought the approval of an adult leader.
- For off-site programs and activities or trips, youth will not leave before the published ending time without approval from both the adult leader and a parent or guardian.
- Youth agree to treat each other with respect and kindness, and will not use words (in person or social media) and actions that include aggression, negative language and behavior, intentional exclusion, threats, insults, discrimination, bullying, etc. Should any conflicts ever arise, the youth leader (and Pastor/Church Session when necessary) will address them in a manner that reflects our Christian beliefs and seek the assistance of parent(s) or other adult leaders where appropriate.
- Youth agree to respect programs, events and activities by arriving on time and avoiding being late as much as possible within their control.
- Youth agree to respect the physical location where the youth group activity is being held, and agree to help with cleanup activities following events whenever necessary,
- Youth will show respect for everyone with whom they come in contact through their actions and words.
- If behavior contrary to this Covenant is displayed by a youth while participating in a Concord Church event, whether at Concord or off-site, (including overnight trips for mission work, retreats, etc), it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to arrange and pay for transportation home for their youth in a timely fashion.

I, _____, have read the Concord Youth Group Code of Conduct
Youth Name (print)

and agree to adhere to the rules outlined to ensure that all youth activities provide a safe environment for myself and other youth to participate in.

Youth Signature: _____ Date: _____

I, _____, have read the Concord Youth Group Code of Conduct
Parent Name (print)

and agree to support my child and Concord youth activities by acknowledging the rules above and reminding my child of them as needed.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____