

# *Child Protection Policy*

## **I. Introduction**

*But 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*

As a caring Christian community, we at First Christian Church are committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children and for all those working with children.

The intention of this policy is to protect children from child abuse and to ensure that those working with children are not subjected to false or unwarranted charges of child abuse. For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

**Children** or **Youth** are any participants under the age of 18, or those over 18 participating as youth in church-sponsored activities. The **Leader of the Christian Education Team (CE Team Leader)** oversees the congregation's ministry for children and youth. Unpaid **Volunteers** are those who provide leadership to ministries for children and youth. Paid **Employees** are part-time or full-time workers employed by the congregation. **Pastor** refers to the Senior Pastor. When appropriate, the pastor may designate another staff person to fulfill the duties outlined for the pastor in this policy. **Abuse** refers to any physical, emotional, sexual, ritual abuse or neglect.

## **II. Standards of Conduct**

### **Eligibility for Working with Children**

The following guidelines will govern the eligibility of volunteers to work with children:

- Volunteers should be active participants in the congregation for at least six months before working with children.
- Volunteers should be 21 years of age or older to lead the high school youth. Volunteers should be 18 years of age or older to lead the middle school youth or younger children.

Exceptions to these guidelines will be made at the discretion of the pastor and/or the Leader of the Christian Education Team.

### **Volunteer Screening and Training**

New volunteers who meet the eligibility requirements above will meet with one of the pastors and/or the CE Team Leader before volunteering (this may be an informal

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meeting, or a formal training session). The protection policy will be reviewed and the volunteer will be asked to sign the protection covenant in addition to filling out the volunteer information form. Any applicant who may pose a threat to children or youth will not be accepted as a volunteer.

All volunteers will be asked to review the protection policy annually, and to sign a new protection covenant each year.

### **Employee Screening and Training**

All employees of the church (full-time and part-time) will review this policy and sign the protection covenant upon being hired, and then again annually.

In addition, all employees will fill out an employment information form (in addition to any position-specific material), provide references, and undergo a criminal background check at the time of their hire. The cost of the background check will be paid by the congregation.

### **First-Aid/CPR Training**

Volunteers and employees are encouraged to complete First-Aid/CPR training, and the Christian Education Team will periodically offer opportunities for such training.

### **Appropriate Caregiving**

As a community of caring Christians, expressions of affection and affirmation are important in building life-giving relationships. Appropriate expressions of care include hugs; hand-holding (for example, in prayer time, or when moving a group of children from one place to another); lap-sitting for younger children; and pats on the shoulder, arm, or back. Physical care that provides for the well-being and safety of children, such as diaper changes, toileting, and first aid, are also appropriate. Care should be taken, however, that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed on another individual.

### **Appropriate Discipline**

Appropriate discipline at any activity is important for the safety and well-being of our children. Communication between volunteers and the CE Team Leader and/or pastor is encouraged for any classroom management concerns. Employees and volunteers should follow the following procedures:

- If a child is behaving inappropriately, the employee or volunteer will tell the child specifically what he or she is doing that is not acceptable, and state what the expected behavior involves. For example, “We do not throw blocks. We use blocks for building,” or, “We can’t listen to the story if you are talking. Let’s talk after we hear the story.” If this approach is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity.
- If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students.

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- If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child's parent or guardian will be contacted to retrieve the child.
- No physical punishment or verbal abuse is to be used at any time. If 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 or guardian as soon as possible.

### **Two-Adult Rule/Three-Person Rule**

Two adults who are 18 or older should be present at every activity involving children or youth. When this is not possible, the three-person rule will be followed: an adult volunteer will always be in the presence of two or more children or youth, age fifth-grade or older. One of the pastors, the Christian Education Team Leader, or another appointed "floater" will move in and out of the classrooms providing additional supervision during all activities with children and youth.

### **Visual Access**

To the maximum extent practicable, there shall be visual access into each room in which activities with children are being conducted.

### **Private Counseling**

To the maximum extent practicable, any counseling with children or youth will be conducted in the presence of a second adult. In no case shall an unaccompanied volunteer or employee meet with a single child unless there is at least one other employee or volunteer nearby who is aware that the private meeting is being held and the location of that meeting, although the identity of the child may remain confidential.

### **Photography and Video**

Photographs and video are sometimes taken of children and youth at church events, and used in church publications and online. Parental permission will be received before using photographs and video.

### **Outside Groups**

Non-church groups involving children and youth using the church facilities will comply with these policies. A representative from the group will sign the child protection covenant.

### **Communication with Parents**

A registration form will be filled out by parents/guardians at the start of each school year, granting permission for children to participate in church activities. Additional permission forms will be used for special events and outings. In the rare instance when activities involving children and youth are held without complying with these protection policies, parents will be notified ahead of time.

### **III. Responding to Allegations of Abuse**

First Christian Church considers any allegation of abuse a serious matter. The congregation will respond to any allegation of abuse in the following manner:

- The congregation will pray for all persons affected by the allegation.
- Any individual who has a reasonable suspicion of abuse must promptly report the suspicion to one of the pastors or to the Leader of the Christian Education Team.
- The pastor and/or CE Team Leader shall ensure that any credible allegation of child abuse is reported to the proper authorities in accordance with North Carolina laws, and that the following people are notified:
  - Parents of the alleged victim
  - The Chair of the Church Board
  - The Chair of the Elders
  - A Trustee, for appropriate notification of the church's insurance company.
  - Regional Minister: Rev. John Richardson (252-291-4047; [john@ncdisciples.org](mailto:john@ncdisciples.org))
  - North Carolina Division of Social Services Child Protective Services/ Guilford County Department of Social Services (336-641-3000) <http://www.co.guilford.nc.us/government/socservices/index.html>
- Those involved will keep written documentation of all procedures involved in handling the allegation.
- One person, who shall be appointed in consultation with the pastor, the CE Team Leader and the Board Chair, will serve as a spokesperson on behalf of the church in communications with law enforcement, media, and the community.
- The alleged abuser will be treated with care and respect, but will be removed from involvement with children and youth pending the outcome of the investigation.

### **IV. Administration and Review**

All volunteers, employees, and members of the congregation are expected to help ensure that these policies are followed. Any violation of these policies should be reported to the Leader of the Christian Education Team and/or the pastor.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Leader of the Christian Education Team and one of the pastors to ensure that the ministries of the congregation are in compliance with the policy. If it is determined that changes need to be made, a task force will be appointed to review the policy and take any changes to the church board for approval.

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## **V. Additional Resources**

*Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*, by Joy Thornburg Melton (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2004).

North Carolina Division of Social Services Child Protective Services/ Guilford County  
Department of Social Services (336-641-3000)

<http://www.co.guilford.nc.us/government/socservices/index.html>

Regional Offices of the Christian Church in North Carolina

509 Lee Street, NE

Wilson, NC 27893

252-291-4047

[www.ncdisciples.org](http://www.ncdisciples.org)

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**Child Protection Covenant**

*To be completed by all volunteers and employees annually. Originals of this form should be filed by the Trustees, with copies retained by the Christian Education Team.*

*Name*

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I accept the responsibility to nurture the Christian faith and well-being of the children of First Christian Church and to care for them as Christ cares for me.

I have read and understand the Child Protection Policy, and I agree to abide by the practices set forth while working with children and youth.

I covenant to:

- Follow the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times
- Foster healthy communication between volunteers, parents, and church leaders
- Attend training sessions as they are offered by the Christian Education Council
- Review this policy annually

*Signature*

*Date*

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Have you ever participated in, been accused of, pleaded guilty/no contest to, or been convicted of abuse or any sexual misconduct? If yes, please explain:

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Have you ever been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest to, any criminal offense?

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*Signature*

*Date*

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**Volunteer Information Form**

*To be completed by all new volunteers. Originals of this form should be filed by the Trustees, with copies retained by the Christian Education Team.*

Name:

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Address:

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Phone Number(s):

Email:

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Occupation:

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Previous Volunteer Experience:

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Previous Churches Attended:

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Do you have your own transportation and a valid driver's license?

DL#:

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Why would you like to volunteer with children and youth at First Christian Church?

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Have you ever participated in, been accused of, pleaded guilty/no contest to, or been convicted of abuse or any sexual misconduct?

If yes, please explain:

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Have you ever been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest to, any criminal offense?

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**References:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

*Volunteer Signature*

*Date*

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**Administrative Use:**

References Contacted (*2 minimum*):

Name:

Contact Date:

Name:

Contact Date:

Name:

Contact Date:

Meeting with Volunteer:

Date:

Notes:

*Signature of CE Team Leader or Pastor*

*Date*

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**Basic Employee Information Form**

*To be completed by all employees, in addition to other position-specific materials. Originals of this form should be filed by the Trustees, with copies retained by the Christian Education Team.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have your own transportation and a valid driver's license? \_\_\_\_\_

DL#: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever participated in, been accused of, pleaded guilty/no contest to, or been convicted of abuse or any sexual misconduct? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest to, any criminal offense? \_\_\_\_\_

**References:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

*Employee Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date* \_\_\_\_\_

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**Administrative Use:**

References Contacted (*2 minimum*):

Name:

Contact Date:

Name:

Contact Date:

Name:

Contact Date:

Meeting with Volunteer:

Date:

Notes:

*Signature of CE Team Leader or Pastor*

*Date*