

# Shandon Presbyterian Church

## Child Protection Policy

### Statement of Purpose

Leadership in the Church demands the highest standards of moral integrity and personal responsibility. It is a gift of the Spirit that can only be effectively exercised in an environment of trust. As the Gospel witness makes abundantly clear, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded." (Luke 12:48)

Since trust is so fundamental to the well-being of the Christian community, Christian people have the right to expect that those they choose as leaders (both lay and ordained) understand and are committed to standards of behavior that are trustworthy. In receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, we enter a sacred covenant with God and are adopted into the covenant family of the Church. Trust is a key component that exists in this covenant. As the Church and the body of Christ we are united with all the people of God in every place and every time. We are bound to serve and to respect the dignity of every human being. When this trust is broken through some form of misconduct, not only is someone's dignity diminished and their well-being seriously harmed, but harm is also done to the community of faith.

Shandon Presbyterian Church is committed to maintaining a safe environment for every child and young person involved in its program ministry. In today's environment a well-balanced, proactive prevention policy is necessary for any institution entrusted with the care of children and youth. In response, Shandon has established this Child Protection Policy [hereafter "The Policy"]. The Policy applies to all those who work with children and youth through Shandon programs both on and off campus, including full-time and part-time staff, Shandon Weekday School (SWS) workers, and volunteers, whether they be church members, visitors, or guests.

### Implementation of Policy

Implementation of the Policy will include:

- Careful selection of staff, teachers, caregivers, and others involved in activities with children and youth
- Orientation and training of these individuals
- Supervision of these individuals
- Accurate reporting of incidents of child abuse or neglect
- Responding to incidents or allegations of abuse or neglect
- Monitoring the policy and procedures to insure compliance
- Healing process for the congregation

The Education Committee shall be responsible for the oversight, monitoring, and enforcement of the Policy.

## Guidelines for Workers & Volunteers

These guidelines shall apply to all individuals who work with children or youth. All SWS employees are governed by child protection standards established by law and the South Carolina Department of Social Services.

### A. Volunteer approval

- Staff members will ask adults to volunteer to work with children and youth or approve an offer to volunteer with children and youth.
- Six-month waiting period
  - All volunteers must have been a member of Shandon Presbyterian or affiliated with Shandon for a period of six months to be eligible to volunteer to work with children/youth.
- Background checks
  - The Business Manager, or their designee, will perform all criminal background checks, including additional reference checks where appropriate. Background checks or new reference checks may be requested either randomly or because of some concern. At a minimum, background checks will be repeated every two years for all volunteers and staff who work with minors at Shandon Presbyterian Church.

### B. Two adult rule

- Two unrelated adults (over the age of 18) will be present during children/youth activities. In an emergency, one adult may be present for on campus activities if classroom doors are left open (doors with unobstructed, transparent windows may be closed) and if hall monitors are provided for periodic observation.

### C. Youth workers

- No one under the age of 18 may work with infants or toddlers.
- Youth may assist the two adult caregivers in childcare as aides but may not be solely responsible and may not be left in a room alone with children. The youth must not be related to either of the adult caregivers.

### D. Nurseries

- A tag system will be used for all nurseries. This system will enable the caregivers in the crib and toddler nurseries to correctly identify a parent or guardian when a child is picked up.
- Only the assigned caregivers are allowed into the nursery rooms. All others, including parents, friends, guardians, must remain outside the room.

### E. Duty to report

- Individuals who observe questionable or inappropriate behavior affecting children/youth must report it as soon as possible to the appropriate supervising staff person, volunteer coordinator, or to one of the ministers. The supervising staff person or volunteer coordinator will notify a minister. The minister, or their designee, shall document the report in accordance with Section VI below. If the alleged incident involves a minister, an additional report shall be made to the Chair of Personnel Committee and the Clerk of Session, who will report the incident to the General Presbyter.

#### F. Awareness

- Adults are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for abuse and to appearances of abuse. They should not hesitate to exercise appropriate responsibility if they observe activities that are, or might appear to be, inappropriate.

#### G. Continuing applicability

- Procedures should be followed before, during, and after events while children are not in the custody of parents or guardians.

#### H. Injuries/ Accident Reports

- For any injury to a child under the age of 18, an incident report should be completed with one copy given to the parent and one copy to the Director of Children's Ministry.

#### I. Overnight outings

- There will be two unrelated adults supervising any group of youth/children at all times. No minor or group of minors should be left in the care of only one adult. Same-gender, adult supervision will be provided for all overnight trips. In situations like a retreat, adult/youth supervision may be accomplished with adult advisors from other churches.

#### J. Supervision

- Each Ministry, the SWS, and all staff working with children/youth are responsible for making certain that proper supervision is in place for workers in their programs and activities. Every Ministry Chair, the Director of SWS, and all staff working with children/youth are responsible for reporting to the Personnel Ministry, by September 30 of each year, that proper procedures are in place within their area of responsibility to promote compliance with these guidelines.

#### K. Transportation

- All adult drivers at child/youth events must have proper licensure and insurance. All vehicles used must have seat belts for the driver and each passenger. All drivers transporting minors must be over the age of twenty-five and must be informed that if their vehicle is used, their insurance is primary if an accident occurs. If a charter bus is rented, or any outside carrier contracted, the company hired must ensure criminal background checks on their drivers. Each vehicle must follow the ratio rules for child/youth events. Under no circumstances is an adult permitted to be alone with a minor in a vehicle. No minor may be a driver during any event.

- Drivers of the Shandon Church bus must have a copy of their driver's license on file with the Church Administrator and be between the ages of 25 and 70.

L. Best Practices:

- Do not engage in profanity or make explicit jokes.
- Do not shame or mock others.
- Do not engage in sexual activity or other inappropriate deliberate physical contact with, or in the presence of, minors.
- Do not engage in abusive conduct of any kind towards, or in the presence of, minors.
- Do not give gifts to minors.
- Do not use or be under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs in the presence of minors or provide minors with the same.
- Do not engage in sexual misconduct.
- Maintain the two-adult rule on Zoom and other video enabled meetings with minors.

## Social Media, Texting, and Email

- A. Adults will not initiate a friend or follow request with children or youth on any social media platform. If a child or youth sends an adult a friend request or requests to follow the adult, the adult will discern the level of contact they wish to maintain with the youth prior to responding to the request.
- B. Communication between youth and adults should only take place between the hours of 7 am and 9 pm unless it is an emergency. In the event of an emergency, the Pastoral Associate or other staff member will inform the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor of the emergency and contact the parent. An example of an exception is during overnight trips or late-night events in which planned activities occur outside these hours.
- C. Adults who are connected to youth on social media must agree to refrain from posting any inappropriate content.
- D. On their personal social media pages/accounts, adults will not tag or otherwise identify children/youth in photos posted online of church related activities/events.
- E. Emailing and/or texting with children/youth about anything beyond matters related to the church should be avoided and should be brought to the attention of the Pastoral Associate for Youth and Young Adult Ministry, the Director of Children's Ministries, or the Senior Pastor immediately.
- F. All communication between a child/youth and an adult not directly involving church matters must include two adults, with one preferably being a staff member of Shandon Presbyterian Church.

## Procedure for Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Abuse

All reports of suspected abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, verbal) of children or youth associated with the church shall be made promptly and shall be made directly to the Director of Children's Ministries or one of the church's pastors. Paid staff and volunteers will adhere to the requirements of South Carolina law for reporting suspected abuse. In accordance with the requirements of the law, and as far as practicable, such reports shall be treated as confidential. If the accused is a member of the clergy and this policy conflicts with the current Book of Order: Rules of Discipline, priority is given to the Book of Order.

- A. In the event of a report concerning a paid church staff member, the person to whom the report was made shall confer with the head of staff or personnel and may request the assistance of another church staff member regarding the steps to be taken concerning further investigation, if any, further reporting, or interim or final disposition.
- B. In the event of a report concerning a volunteer, Shandon staff members may request the assistance of another church staff member regarding the steps to be taken concerning further investigation, if any, further reporting, or interim or final disposition.
- C. All incidents involving illness or injury of any kind to any child or youth during a church sponsored event shall be reported to the parent or guardian of the child or youth, and to the Director of Children's Ministries or the Pastoral Associate for Youth and Young Adults.
- D. In the event of a conflict between this policy and any liability insurance policy of the church, the requirements of the liability insurance policy shall govern.
- E. The session of the church has the authority to set appropriate parameters for a person found to have committed some form of abuse to continue participating as a member of the church.
- F. We will follow the disciplinary actions set out in the most recent edition of the Presbyterian Book of Order, PC(USA) ("Rules of Discipline" section).

The following procedures will be followed in the event of an incident or allegation of abuse:

- A. Report
  - The person reporting the incident will document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances to the appropriate staff person and a minister within 24 hours of the incident. The incident will be reported to the Richland County Department of Social Services or law enforcement as appropriate. If the alleged incident involves a minister, a report shall be made to the Chair of Personnel Committee and the Clerk of Session, who will report the incident to the General Presbyter. Procedures for handling alleged individual ministers are governed by abuse policies approved by Trinity Presbytery.
- B. Notify parents/guardians

- The Senior Pastor or their designee will notify the parents/guardians of the suspected victim as soon as possible of the incident.
- C. Document all actions
- The Senior Pastor, or their designee, and an appropriate staff person, will document all steps taken while handling the reported incident.
- D. Minister to all concerned
- The church will minister, as possible, to individuals who in good faith make reports of actual or reasonably suspected cases of abuse, to those who are accused, and those who are abused. All reports will be taken seriously, but not judged prematurely.
- E. Law enforcement to investigate
- Only the appropriate law enforcement authorities will carry out an in-depth investigation.
- F. Report to Insurer
- The Senior Pastor or their designee will make the appropriate report to the liability insurer for the church.
- G. Treatment of accused
- Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities until the investigation is completed and allegations are cleared.
- H. Statements to the media
- The Senior Pastor or their designee will be the sole spokesperson for the church insofar as media inquiries are concerned. In the event the Senior Pastor is the accused, then the Personnel Committee shall appoint a spokesperson.
- I. Confidentiality
- To the extent possible, confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded.

## Healing the Congregation

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing songs to God. And whatever you, in word and deed, do everything in the name of Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Col. 3:12-17

At Shandon Presbyterian Church we take every precaution we possibly can to protect our children, however we have to recognize that incidents may occur. These situations can have a tremendous impact on the individuals, as well as the entire congregation. To help the community of faith deal with this betrayal of trust, we have outlined five main components necessary for the healing process:

A. Truth telling

- We must acknowledge what has happened. Ignoring the issue could only make things worse.

B. Sharing and validation of feelings

- There are many emotions that surround the betrayal of trust: shock, anger, disbelief, and fear. To help the community of faith acknowledge and validate these feelings as well as find some resolution, we encourage group mediation with a trained pastoral counselor.

C. Education

- Commitment to the safety and well-being of children and youth is our number one priority. We must communicate that commitment to the congregation in order for trust to be reestablished. We also must reeducate members on how we can collectively protect our children.

D. Spiritual reflection

- In a community of faith, we turn to God for guidance and direction, especially during difficult times. We turn to scripture, like the words Paul gave to the Colossians (Col. 3:12-17) during their crisis, or the comforting words of Psalm 23, and we pray that the "peace of Christ will rule in our hearts." We turn to God in prayer and emphasize the grace of Jesus Christ that will lift us up and love us forever.

E. Where do we go from here?

- Answering the question, "What else do we have to do in order to be able to heal?" As a congregation and as the body of Christ, where do we go from here? What do we need to do to mend ourselves so that we can go about the mission of the church?

Approved by Session on September 19, 2023

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge that I have read this document in its entirety and agree to abide by it in my capacity as an adult participant working with minors on campus and off-campus of Shandon Presbyterian Church.

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Information

Shandon Presbyterian Church member since: \_\_\_\_\_

If not a member, how long have you been affiliated with Shandon? \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain your affiliation on the back of the sheet.

Name (first, middle, last): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Criminal History

Have you ever been convicted or pled guilty to a crime? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If your answer is yes, please explain on the back of the sheet.

## Worker's Pledge, Consent to Background Checks, and Release

I certify that the above information is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I have not been, nor am I currently, involved in any abuse of a minor, nor have I had a conviction or finding related to children or youth rendered against me.

I have received a copy of Shandon Presbyterian Church Child Protection Policy, have read it and agree to observe all church policies and procedures regarding working with children and youth.

I authorize Shandon Presbyterian Church and/or its agents or employees to make an independent investigation of my background, including checking references and conducting criminal background checks, only for the purpose of assessing my qualifications for working with youth and children.

I release Shandon Presbyterian Church and/or its agents or employees, or any individual or organization that provides information pursuant to this authorization, from all liabilities, claims or lawsuits in regard to the information given.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_



**SHANDON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH INCIDENT REPORT FORM  
CONFIDENTIAL**

Note: Timeliness of reporting is essential. Therefore, do not delay in making an initial report even if all of the information required by this form is not immediately available. Use additional pages if more space is required to provide full responses.

Report Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child / Youth involved: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent / Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Child / Youth involved: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Notified: Yes No Time / Date of Notification: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Incident:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Injuries Noted:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Witnesses (names, ages):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Description of any action taken:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Direct quotes / statements of child / youth involved (Note: Do not interview the child or youth; report only statements or comments shared with you):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name / Signature of person making the report:  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

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