

## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF MESA

### CHILD PROTECTION and SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY AND ITS PROCEDURES

January 2018

#### I. Policy Statement

It is the policy of First Presbyterian Church of Mesa (FPC Mesa) and FPC Mesa Preschool that all church members, church officers, nonmember employees, and volunteers of congregations, governing bodies, and entities of the church are to maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationship at all times. Persons who engage in sexual misconduct are in violation of the principles set forth in Scripture, and also of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationship. It is never permissible or acceptable for a church member, officer, employee, or volunteer to engage in sexual misconduct.

This policy applies to all members and those who serve in the staff, programs, and positions of leadership (volunteer or paid) in the church.

#### Distribution

Copies of this policy and its procedures shall be distributed to all teachers, youth leaders and volunteers, plus ruling elders, deacons and staff of FPC Mesa. It is intended as guidance for everyone at FPC Mesa especially those in contact with children. This policy and its procedures should be made available to persons who accuse others of misconduct, including those who are or claim to be victims of sexual misconduct and their families.

#### II. Standards of Conduct

... As [God] who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct;  
... Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, ...  
not under compulsion but willingly, ...  
not for sordid gain but eagerly. ...  
not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.  
... You know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

1 Pet. 1:15; 5:2–3; Jas. 3:1, NRSV

The ethical conduct of all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ is of vital importance to the church because through these representatives an understanding of God and the gospel's good news is conveyed. "Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world."

The basic principles of conduct guiding this policy are as follows:

1. Sexual misconduct is a violation of the role of pastors, employees, volunteers, counselors, supervisors, teachers, and advisors of any kind who are called upon to exercise integrity, sensitivity, and caring in a trust relationship. It breaks the covenant to act in the best interests of parishioners, clients, co-workers, and students.

2. Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. If the parishioner, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is the pastor's, counselor's, officer's, or supervisor's responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship.
3. Sexual misconduct takes advantage of the vulnerability of persons who are less powerful to act for their own welfare, including children. It is antithetical to the gospel call to work as God's servant in the struggle to bring wholeness to a broken world. It violates the mandate to protect the vulnerable from harm.

### **Definitions**

Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy to include:

1. Child sexual abuse; including, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not "consented to" by the child. The sexual abuse definition of a child is anyone under age eighteen.
2. Sexual abuse as defined in the *Book of Order*: "Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position" (*Book of Order*, D-10.0401c).
3. Sexual harassment; defined for this policy is as follows: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when
  - a. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or their continued status in an institution;
  - b. submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual;
  - c. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; or
  - d. an individual is subjected to unwelcome sexual jokes, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or display of sexual visuals that insult, degrade, and/or sexually exploit men, women, or children.
4. Rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.
5. Sexual conduct (such as offensive, obsessive or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact that makes a person feel uncomfortable i.e. staring, unwelcome touching or fondling) that

is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.

6. Sexual Malfeasance; as defined by the broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship.
7. Misuse of technology; use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting or emailing suggestive messages and images to persons with whom one has a ministerial relationship. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.

### **III. Church Response to Allegations of Sexual Misconduct**

#### **1. Principles**

In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, persons in ordered ministry, and employees of the church should seek healing and assure the protection of all persons. Where possible, the privacy of persons should be respected and confidentiality of communications should be maintained.

In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, persons in ordered ministry, and employees of the church should seek to uphold the dignity of all persons involved, including persons who are alleging harm, persons who are accused of sexual misconduct, and the families and communities of each.

FPC Mesa has jurisdiction over its members, volunteers, and employees such that if a member, volunteer, officer, or employee is alleged to have committed an offense, the church has the duty to inquire into the allegations and, if the allegations are proven, to correct the behavior of the member, officer, or employee and ensure the safety of others in the community. Allegations of sexual misconduct are always considered allegations of offense against Scripture that trigger the disciplinary processes of the set forth in the *Book of Order*. In the case of an active non-member who is employed or volunteers with the church, the individual will be covered by the procedures of the written personnel policies of the governing body or entity.

If the person accused of sexual misconduct is no longer a member, officer, or employee of FPC Mesa, but the conduct occurred while the person was acting on behalf of FPC Mesa, the church does not have jurisdiction to correct the behavior, but it does have a duty to hear the allegations of offense and to take measures to prevent future occurrences of harm. The session may appoint an administrative committee or commission to hear the allegations of sexual misconduct. The session may also take measures to prevent future occurrences of harm through education and policy.

## 2. Reporting Requirements

### 1. Reporting Sexual Misconduct

A person needing to report that a member, officer, employee, or volunteer of the FPC Mesa has committed sexual misconduct is encouraged to seek guidance from a FPC Mesa Pastor or ruling elder regarding filing the report.

If the person who is accused of committing sexual misconduct is a member, ruling elder, deacon, volunteer, or employee of a congregation, the report of allegations should be made to the pastor, the clerk of session, or the chair of the personnel committee. If the accused is a member or officer of the church, the church will respond by using the procedures set forth in the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the accused is a nonmember employee or volunteer, the church will respond by using procedures set forth by the session of the congregation.

### 2. Cooperation with Investigations

FPC Mesa expects and requires the cooperation of all employees in the investigation of violations of the Code of Conduct, Ministry Standards or other misconduct, including a complainant, witness, and the accused offender. We may interview these individuals privately and take oral and/or written statements from them. Any person who fails to cooperate with such an investigation or to provide complete and truthful information may be subject to disciplinary action.

### 3. Notification of Parents

A minor child may be party to an incident either as an initiator or as the victim. Whether a child is initiator or victim may not be clear in all circumstances, such as a child-on-child incident. And violation of policy does not necessarily create a victim. While notification of parents of such circumstances may be warranted, utmost care in communication is required.

Therefore, Pastor or anyone having knowledge of an incident which warrants communication to a parent shall first consult with the Pastor, C.E. Director, Clerk of Session or currently serving elders. While communicating with a parent, and being mindful of the importance of timely communication, care shall be given to assessing:

- a. The specific facts;
- b. Whether a disciplinary or termination process is required;
- c. Whether a child should be dismissed from a program (requiring notification of other parents/guardians);
- d. Whether “mandatory reporting” is a factor;
- e. Who shall and in what manner communicate with the parents/guardian;
- f. Whether the Pastor should be involved in the communication;
- g. Necessary action to prevent a further incident.

Notification of parents shall not be delayed when immediate medical care is required.

4. Victim Needs

We will attend to the immediate needs of victims by providing support and pastoral care. In the event of cases of reportable abuse, the policy of FPC Mesa is to be responsive to the needs of victims within the constraints or obligations imposed under insurance contracts.

5. Responsibility of Employees and Volunteers

Each employee or volunteer is obligated to fulfill the Code of Conduct and Ministry Standards both by living the standard and helping others to do the same. Each is obligated to guide and gently correct others as they would in a circumstance of high personal risk. When another person, regardless of status, rank or power, repeats a violation of the Code of Conduct or Ministry Standards, the employee/volunteer observer must report the violation to his/her own immediate supervisor, or the next level of authority if necessary.

Reporting responsibility includes incidents of child-on-child sexual activity, dangerous behaviors, employee-on-employee sexual harassment, bullying of any kind, the exploitation of a vulnerable adult or circumstances which rise to the level of abuse requiring action by a mandatory reporter.

6. Receiving Reports of Sexual Misconduct

Reports of allegations of sexual misconduct will occur in a variety of ways.

Because the session or entity cannot control to whom the victim of sexual misconduct will speak first, it is important that officers, employees, and persons highly visible to church members and visitors understand how reports of incidents are channeled to the proper person. The allegations may come from persons who have or who do not have a formal relationship with FPC Mesa and may be made to a variety of persons in ordered ministry or leaders within FPC Mesa. It is the duty of these persons in ordered ministry to see that any allegation of sexual misconduct is reported appropriately keeping in mind the mandatory reporting requirements for allegations of child abuse.

Reports of allegations of sexual misconduct should never be taken lightly or disregarded and allowed to circulate without concern for the integrity and reputation of the victim, the accused, and the church. Reports of allegations should be dealt with as matters of highest confidentiality, both before and after they have been submitted to appropriate authorities as outlined below.

The first person to learn of an incident of sexual misconduct should not undertake an inquiry alone or question either the victim or the accused unless the incident is divulged in the process of pastoral care, counseling, or a therapy session. If the victim is hesitant to talk to "higher authorities," the person who has received the initial report has a special pastoral responsibility to build trust and willingness to speak with the accuser, lest the church be unable to respond because no one is able to give firsthand information.

7. The person receiving the initial report of allegations of sexual misconduct shall determine the relationship of the person accused of sexual misconduct with FPC Mesa and shall make sure that the allegations of offense are reported to the session. This may be done by the person alleging harm or by any member of FPC Mesa.

If the report is made orally, the person receiving the report of allegations shall request that the person making the report of allegations place it in writing. A report of allegations of sexual misconduct in writing from a member of the FPC Mesa alleging another member or officer of FPC Mesa committed an offense must be acted on according to the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the Clerk of Session receives a report of allegations in writing from a nonmember of FPC Mesa alleging another member or officer of FPC Mesa committed sexual misconduct, the report also should be acted on according to the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the person who makes the report is unwilling or unable to place it in writing, any member of FPC Mesa should make the written statement that will automatically trigger the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*.

8. Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

All members engaged in ordered ministry (Pastor, ruling elders, and deacons) and certified Christian educators are required to report knowledge of child abuse to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities according to the *Book of Order*. The *Book of Order* requires that:

Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse (G-4.0302).

All persons covered by this policy have an additional duty to report knowledge of child sexual abuse to the employing entity, supervisor, and a session representative. All persons should be informed of and must comply with state and local laws regarding incidents of actual or suspected child sexual abuse. These reports should be made within a reasonable time of receiving the information.

These provisions of the *Book of Order* attempt to balance conflicting moral duties for officers of FPC Mesa.

For teaching elders, the provision strives to balance the duty to protect children from future harm with the duty of a minister to hold in confidence any information revealed to them during the exercise of pastoral care in any ministry setting as defined in G-4.0301 in the *Book of Order*.

For ruling elders, deacons, and certified Christian educators, the provisions strive to balance the duty of an officer of the church to protect children from harm and any secular duty the officer

may have to hold in confidence any information revealed as a result of a secular relationship such as attorney/client, counselor/client, or physician/patient. The secular duties will be a function of secular law and may vary from state to state.

### 3. **Responding**

The appropriate response will vary according to the relationship of FPC Mesa with the person who is accused of sexual misconduct. Church members and persons in ordered ministry are subject to inquiry and discipline (censure and correction) under the *Book of Order*. Non church member employees and volunteers are subject to oversight and correction by the session and/or the entity that employs them.

#### 1. *Accused Covered by Book of Order*

When an allegation of offense of sexual misconduct has been received, the clerk of session will report to the session that an offense has been alleged and that the session will proceed according to the procedures set forth in the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. The session should appoint an investigating committee to inquire into the allegations. The investigating committee must promptly begin its inquiry into the allegations. Delay may cause further harm to the victim and/or the accused.

Governing bodies and entities must cooperate with civil authorities in an investigation of child sexual abuse or other criminal sexual misconduct. Church disciplinary proceedings cannot interfere with a criminal investigation by civil authorities and may have to be suspended until these are completed.

FPC Mesa has original jurisdiction in disciplinary cases involving members, elders, and deacons of the church.

#### 2. *Responding to Media*

Media publicity following an incident of abuse or exploitation may be detrimental to the reputations of individuals, the congregation and the Presbytery. Without intending ever to evade the media, contacts with media must be managed and conducted only by a person specifically designated by the Session to represent the church. No other person(s) may speak on behalf of the church. Unless designated differently in a particular circumstance, the exclusive spokesperson for the church shall be the Moderator of Session or, if no Moderator is currently appointed, the Clerk of Session.

Prior to speaking to media, the above designated spokesperson shall contact and consult with Legal Counsel, to obtain an understanding of appropriate statements or admissions and issues of privacy that may apply to the situation. (Insurance Board clients only.)

Designated spokesperson shall give immediate consideration to securing Insurance Board media relations and crisis management resources. Considering the speed of news cycles, a prompt determination is required, erring on the side of seeking help.

### 3. Accused Not Covered by *Book of Order*

When the session receives an accusation of offense of sexual misconduct against a nonmember employee or volunteer, the procedural response of the session will be guided by the written personnel policies of the session. The session will have a personnel committee that will be responsible for the inquiry.

The committee or commission that will respond to the allegation of offense of sexual misconduct will do the following:

- a. Determine whether or not the allegation gives rise to a reasonable suspicion of sexual misconduct by the accused.
- b. If so, gather additional information necessary to make a decision about correcting the behavior.
- c. Determine any remedies, including limiting ministry, suspension, or termination necessary and advisable under the circumstances. If the accused is a member of another denomination, that denomination will be notified of the allegations and the response.
- d. Inform the victim and the accused of the remedy.
- e. In all cases, the personnel committee shall prepare a written report, which shall be included in the accused's permanent personnel file. The accused shall be allowed to attach any written statements to said documents, also for permanent inclusion in the permanent file.

All procedures shall follow the guidelines set forth by the session, FPC Mesa or an entity of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon.

### 4. Council or Entity Record Keeping

FPC Mesa shall keep detailed records of its actions and minutes of its deliberations and its conversations with the accuser, the accused, and other parties involved, correspondence, and copies of the reports received from committees or commissions. Such records will be kept confidential as far as possible. In Case # 208-6, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) interpreted the Rules of Discipline to say that a Council or entity may share the contents of inquiry reports with other governing bodies or entities of the PC(USA) when necessary. The clerk of the session or director of an entity will maintain the records while the inquiry is in process.



## Appendix A Definitions

**Accused** is the term used to represent the person against whom a claim of sexual misconduct is made.

**Accuser** is a term used to represent the person claiming knowledge of sexual misconduct by a person covered by this policy. The accuser may or may not have been the victim of the alleged sexual misconduct. A person such as a family member, friend or colleague may be the accuser.

**Church** when spelled with the initial capitalized refers to the Presbyterian Church (USA). Church when spelled with the initial in lowercase refers to local churches. The word congregation is used loosely for members and participants.

**Council** is a representative body composed of pastors, ruling elders, sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. A Council may establish entities such as day-care centers, conference centers, camps or homes for the aged. A Council may have both church members and nonmembers as employees.

**Employee** is the comprehensive term used to cover individuals who are hired or called to work for the Church for salary or wages.

**Entity** is the term used to refer to any programs or office managed by a board, committee, Leadership Team, or other body whose membership is elected by a Council.

**Mandated Reporter** is described by some states' laws as a person who is required to report any and all suspected incidents of child abuse, including child sexual abuse that come to their attention. State laws vary from defining "all person having knowledge" as mandated reporters to specifying very limited lists of professions whose members are required to report.

**Persons Covered** by this policy includes church members, church persons in ordered ministry, and nonmembers who are employees or volunteers of the First Presbyterian Church of Mesa.

**Prohibited sexual harassment** includes unsolicited and unwelcomed contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations including through use of social media through e-mail, texting, Tweeting or Facebook comments;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

**Response** is the action taken by the Council or entity when a report of sexual misconduct is received. It may include (1) inquiry into facts and circumstances, (2) possible disciplinary action (administrative or judicial or both), (3) pastoral care for victims and their families and others, and (4) pastoral care and rehabilitation for the accused and care for their families.

**Secular Authorities** are the governmental bodies, whether city, county, state, or federal, who are given the responsibility to investigate, criminally prosecute, and/or bring civil charges against individuals accused of sexual crimes or offenses against adults and children.

**Secular Law** is the body of municipal, state, and federal laws and is often referred to collectively as civil and criminal law. Prohibited behavior addressed by this policy may result in criminal and/or civil charges filed under secular law.

**Sexual Exploitation** Sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a Minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the Minister.

**Sexual Harassment** Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance or instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

**Sexual Harassment** also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is not permissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church. For example, it is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

**Suspected Abuse** Actual abuse consists of physical, sexual or mental abuse inflicted by a person responsible for a child's health, welfare or care, who may be a parent, guardian or other person having access to a child. Abuse may include neglect of a person's health as a result of failure to properly feed, clothe or attend to apparent illness or mental well-being. As a caregiver in ministry, one need not directly witness, nor is one likely to directly witness actual abuse. It is sufficient to suspect abuse based upon observations of general health, physical condition, patterns of irregular behavior and

environmental factors. Examples of observations might include: bruising on multiple occasions, weight loss, chronic physical illness, and anti-social or excessively withdrawn behavior. Environmental factors may include highly contentious divorce and custody battles, or parental drug use. One must use judgment in assessing multiple factors which lead to suspicion of abuse.

While “suspected abuse” is defined here for the benefit of “mandatory reporters”, the definition, for the purpose of this policy, includes “suspected abuse” of a “vulnerable adult”.

**Victim** is a person claiming to have been harmed and/or abused by a person covered under this policy.

**Volunteer** is term used for those who provide services for First Presbyterian Church Mesa, AZ. Volunteers include persons elected or appointed to serve on boards, committees, and other groups. For purposes of this policy, volunteers are to be treated in the same way as employees.

**Vulnerable Adult** is any adult person who by reason of profound physical disability or dependence, developmental disability, mental illness, relative social power or cultural circumstances may be susceptible to physical abuse, sexual exploitation, financial exploitation or manipulation as a consequence of being unable to physically resist, or render judgments, regarding physical, mental, financial or environmental well-being. Such persons may be unable to act independently and may, to their detriment, manifest high levels of trust or fear of persons of perceived power or authority.

## **First Presbyterian Church of Mesa**

### **Ministry Standards**

**January, 2018**

These ministry standards are intended to provide a safe environment for children under the age of 18 and “vulnerable adults” in a variety of circumstances. From time to time it may not be possible to fulfill the standard to the letter. Permission is granted to waive a standard with justification. If it is found that consistent fulfillment of a standard is not practical, the matter shall be elevated to the Session for resolution or amendment of these standards.

#### **I. Dress Code**

In order to provide a positive, respectful and healthy atmosphere FPC Mesa uses a dress code very similar to that adopted by the Mesa School System, as follows:

- No clothing that immodestly exposes the chest, abdomen, genital area or buttocks is permitted.
- Undergarments may not show.
- Tops must cover the midriff all the way to the pants. No tube tops, halter tops or spaghetti straps may be worn. All tops, including tank tops, must have at least two inch or wider straps.
- Appropriate shirts are required under overalls.
- No clothing shall be worn that advertises drugs, alcohol or tobacco related items, or contains inappropriate language.

#### **II. Adult-Child Ratios**

For all activities an adult-child ratio of 2:10 shall be maintained, except that a ratio of 2:25 may apply to a classroom environment with children above the age of (12). In all cases, an employee or volunteer under the age of 18 working with minor children shall be under the supervision of an adult over the age of 21.

Employees or volunteer leaders under the age of 21 shall not supervise or lead a youth group in which the oldest participating minor child is less than three years younger than the supervisor/leader.

#### **III. Bathrooms, Locker Room and Out-of-the-Way Locations**

Employees and volunteers in leadership are to frequently and randomly check bathrooms to assure their security.

#### **IV. Transition and “Free” Time**

Especially during day-long, off-site or overnight activities, children will periodically not be engaged in a supervised activity. Supervision shall be maintained during transition times through the use of chaperones, hall monitors and escorts to minimize the opportunity for security breach or child-on-child incidents. Youth Leaders shall assess at what times and places additional duties are to be assigned to employees and volunteers to assure supervision of transition and free time.

## **V. Transportation of Children**

Transportation of children, whether on buses, motor coaches or private passenger vehicles, is a serious responsibility. Especially when utilizing church owned vehicles or private vehicles of employees and volunteers, utmost care shall be taken in view of the risks associated with managing transportation.

The following standards shall apply:

- No employee or volunteer shall transport a single child that is not his/her own, except as may be required in an emergency or with the approval of a supervisor or parent. Communications shall be established to verify the whereabouts, expected arrival and change of custody of the child
- Any driver operating a vehicle which holds 16 passengers or more, including the driver, shall possess a valid Commercial Driver License (CDL).
- Safe loading limits of the vehicles being used will be maintained.
- Employees and volunteers are not to make unauthorized or unplanned stops.
- All passengers are to be seated, to use seat belts and follow safety laws.
- Employees and volunteers are to be seated on larger vehicles in a way that permits them to supervise young passengers.
- When passengers must disembark at a rest facility or destination, care shall be taken to obtain a headcount on arrival and departure.

## **VI. Off-site Activities (Day Trips)**

Off-site activities require special additional planning, taking into account the nature of the destination and exposure to the public at large. For example, attendance at a public venue, such as an amusement park, will require greater supervision than a visit to a sister church. Due to the increased risk of a child becoming lost or injured during an off-site activity, extra care shall be taken to assure adequate supervision.

The following are minimum requirements:

All off-site activities shall be approved in advance by the Session.

1. The trip leader shall provide a plan outlining transportation and supervision for the activity.
2. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained. Permission forms are to site the destination(s) and activities in which the child might engage (e.g., climbing wall, horseback riding, soccer, baseball, etc.)
3. Parent/guardian providing permission shall indicate who will receive the child on return if other than the person signing the permission.
4. Parent Guardian permission form shall include at least one emergency contact number, medical/dental consent to treat and photo/video release OPT-IN or OPT-OUT.
5. Each employee or volunteer shall be assigned to a specific group of children to supervise. Head counts and roll checks will be conducted routinely.
6. Standards for bathroom activities, transition time and transportation shall be maintained.
7. Parents/guardians shall be provided a means to make emergency contact with the trip leader.

## **VII. Over-night Activities**

Camps generally have the experience and staffing to adopt different standards than these below. The assumption for the purpose of this standard is lodging at a public hotel in an unfamiliar city.

As with off-site activities, over-night activities present an even higher level or risk to children than day trips due to isolation from parents and the 24-hour supervision that is required throughout the activity.

The following standards will apply in addition to standards for off-site activities:

1. All overnight activities, whether on the church site or not, shall have prior approval of the session.
2. All overnight activities include a minimum of two adult chaperones over 21 years of age.
3. All volunteers and employees under 18 years of age must be supervised at all times.
4. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained. Permission forms are to site the destination(s) and activities in which the child might engage (e.g., climbing wall, horseback riding, soccer, baseball, etc.)
5. The parent/guardian providing permission shall indicate who will receive the child on return if other than the person signing the permission.
6. At all times through the night an employee or volunteer must remain on duty at a location to supervise the coming and going of any child and to assure safe evacuation during an emergency and to prevent children sneaking out.
7. Trip leaders or other designated adult shall be aware of potential dangers and continually reevaluate location and situation.
8. For the event of a building evacuation, an outdoor rally point will be designated in advance.
9. A roster will be maintained of the room assignments for each child and adult.
10. A bed check will be conducted at a specific time known to all.
11. Adult-child ratios are to be maintained for outings away from the lodging site.
12. A daily schedule of events shall be maintained with supervisory duty assignments included.
13. Double-queen lodging is preferred at hotels, four to a room. Children in each room will be of similar age. No adult will share a bed with a child without parent/guardian permission.
14. Adult rooms will be scattered among rooms occupied by children. There shall be at least one adult lodged on any floor on which children are sleeping.

## FPC Mesa Code of Conduct

January, 2018

This Code of Conduct Policy defines individual responsibilities as Pastors, officers, employees or volunteers to meet the expectations of First Presbyterian Church of Mesa (FPC Mesa) with respect to behavior or conduct in the service of the ministries of the church, especially those which serve children under the age of 18 and “vulnerable adults.”

### **I. Each person subject to this Code shall:**

1. Act as a team member in fulfilling ministry objectives.
2. Treat children and “vulnerable adults” with respect and fairly without regard to race, age, gender, sexual orientation or religion.
3. Practice those behaviors we regard as necessary and positive and refrain from those behaviors which have been defined as prohibited.

### **II. The following behaviors are prohibited at all times:**

1. Displaying affection in private settings.
2. Using profanity or telling inappropriate jokes.
3. Discussing sexual encounters or personal problems.
4. Dating or becoming romantically involved with children or vulnerable adults.
5. Using or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on church property or at church functions.
6. Possessing or viewing sexually oriented materials on Church property.
7. Having secrets with children.
8. Staring at or using suggestive language that makes a person feel uncomfortable.
9. Engaging in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication.
10. Abusing people in any way including (but not limited to) the following:
  - Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restrain
  - Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, curse
  - Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually oriented conversations
  - Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly
  - Neglect
  - Permit children to engage in the following: hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, games of Truth or Dare, ridicule or humiliation or sexual activity
11. Manipulating or exploiting a person in any way.

Working or meeting one-on-one in private settings with children or vulnerable adults is strongly discouraged. See guidelines on page 3.

### **III. Each pastor or statutory “mandatory reporter” shall report:**

1. Concerns or complaints about other employees and volunteers, other adults, or children to the Pastor or a Member of Session.
2. Allegations or incidents of suspected abuse to the designated law enforcement or child welfare authority.

Each pastor, employee, officer or volunteer worker of FPC Mesa shall conduct him/herself in a manner that serve two purposes:

1. To protect children and “vulnerable adults” from abuse or grooming for abuse elsewhere; and
2. To protect/prevent church staff from engaging in patterns of behavior that may be construed as abusive or predatory. While a single infraction of guidelines may not constitute abuse, a pattern of repeated violations will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from their position.

#### **IV. Approval and Affection**

In providing approval or affection, the following guidelines apply:



### Appropriate Physical Interactions\*

- Side hugs
- Group hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- High-fives
- Verbal praise
- Pats on the head when age appropriate
- Touching hands, shoulders, and arms
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)

### Inappropriate Physical Interactions

- Kisses on lips or cheeks
- Showing affection in isolated area
- Wrestling
- Tickling—prolonged or unwanted
- Any type of massage given by or to a child
- Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer
- Suggestive comments relating to physique or body development
- Touching bottom, chest, or genitals

*\*These may be inappropriate if unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer.*

## **V. Verbal Interactions**

The manner of speaking with children establishes respect. The following guidelines apply:

### Appropriate Verbal Interactions

- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes
- Encouragement
- Praise

### Inappropriate Verbal Interactions (Cont.)

### Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

- Name-calling
- Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving children in personal problems or issues

- Secrets
- Cursing
- Off-color or sexual jokes
- Shaming
- Belittling
- Derogatory remarks
- Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate children
- Derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family

## **VI. Out-of-Program (Off-Site) Contact**

FPC Mesa strongly recommends that pastors, employees, officers or volunteers observe the following forms of outside contact as appropriate and inappropriate:

### Appropriate Outside Contact

- Taking groups of children on an outing
- Attending sporting activities with groups of children
- Attending functions at a child's home, with parents present

### Inappropriate Outside Contact

- Taking one child on an outing without the parents' written permission
- Visiting one child in the child's home, without a parent present
- Entertaining one child in the home of a church employee or volunteer
- A lone child spending the night with a church employee or volunteer

In addition, when outside contact is planned or occurs, the following steps are to be taken:

- When deemed necessary, a supervisor shall review for employee and volunteers what types of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate (above).
- A supervisor shall assure that the employee or volunteer has the parents' permission to engage in outside contact with the child. When time permits, parents shall execute a permission form with a waiver of liability (if permitted by state law).

Because most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a child, private one-on-one meetings with a child are prohibited unless approved in advance by (Chair, Employment Committee). When so permitted, the following guidelines shall apply:

#### **VII. One-on-One Interaction Guidelines**

- When meeting one-on-one with a child, always do so in a public place in full view of others.
- Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high fives, and handshakes.
- If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by.
- Inform other employees and volunteers that you are alone with a child if time permits and ask them to randomly drop in. (Ask to be supervised.)
- Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.

To the extent any of these guidelines may appear to be in conflict, the spirit of them is that one shall seek to be under the supervision of others while meeting privately with a child.

#### **VIII. Social Media**

Electronic Communications – Personal Social Networking Code of Conduct

Each pastor, employee, officer or volunteer who uses the resources of social media shall apply this Social Networking Code of Conduct:

- Prohibit comments that are, or could be construed by any observer, to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- Prohibit sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.

- Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.

In order to facilitate a healthy and effective use of social media, FPC Mesa will:

- Provide children and their parents with this Social Networking Code of Conduct.
- Encourage parents to play a role in monitoring their children's interactions with employees and volunteers.
- Continuously remind children how to interact appropriately through social networking sites.
- Deny participation by individuals who repeatedly violate the Code of Conduct.

\*\*\*\*\*

I agree to comply with all Code of Conduct standards described above relating to children/clients as defined above. If requested to do so, I will cooperate with any investigation of a possible violation of church policies and rules by providing complete and truthful information in an oral and/or written statements.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

