

## **Grace Community Church of Fort Mill (GCC)**

### **Sex Offender Policy**

Grace Community Church of Fort Mill (GCC) is a church that welcomes everyone. We firmly believe that God forgives our sins if we are repentant. In Luke 5:32, Jesus says, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." However, it is not ours to judge someone's sincerity regarding their repentance.

GCC also recognizes that we are called to protect those who are vulnerable in our congregation, particularly children, youth and those who have been subject to sexual abuse in their past. In Mark 9:42, Jesus says, "If anyone causes one of these little ones - those who believe in me - to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck, and they were thrown into the sea." Jesus also says, in Mark 10:14, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Therefore, we are charged as the Body of Christ to protect those who are vulnerable and to remove any barriers that would hamper the formation of their faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In our effort to follow scripture, GCC has implemented the following policy for those who have been convicted of sexual offenses, in any jurisdiction, and would like to attend our services or join GCC.

#### **Definition of Terms:**

**Service(s):** Includes any gathered event of GCC, whether held at 1190 Gold Hill Rd, a rented campus, or at an offsite location.

**Life Group:** Includes any meeting of a GCC small group under the authority and leadership of GCC, whether in a home, at a GCC home location, or other locations.

**Activities:** Includes services, small groups, service events, retreats, conferences, or any other function sponsored by GCC, regardless of the event location.

**Child or children:** Any person under the age of 18 years old.

**Offender:** Anyone who has been convicted of a sexual offense, including rape, sexual assault, child pornography, or child molestation.

**Church Leadership:** Includes, but not limited to, elder, deacon, pastor, teacher, LifeGroup leader, and chair or vicechair of church teams or committees.

**Policy:**

1. Anyone who has been convicted of a sexual offence should self-disclose his or her status (including his/her level designation) to an elder before attending any GCC services or activities. Realizing that someone new to GCC or a first-time visitor will not be aware of this Policy, as soon as the status of an offender is made known, the protocols of this Policy must be honored, and the offender may not attend any GCC services or activities until the requirements of this Policy are fulfilled.
2. The offender is required to provide the necessary information needed to perform a national level background check. A background check will be performed by GCC.
3. Documentation of Court proceedings detailing the offence, conviction, and current status of the offender is to be provided to the Board of Elders.
4. If on probation, the name and contact information of the offender's probation officer is to be provided to the Board of Elders.
5. When an individual ceases to be included on a sex offender registry, a copy of the "Certificate and Order of Discharge," or a similarly equivalent Court document, must be submitted to the individual's Board of Elders to be included in the offender's file; however, this policy will continue to remain in effect.
6. The offender may not attend any GCC services or activities, including small groups, until signing the Attendance Agreement for Sex Offenders.
7. Offenders are prohibited from attending GCC services and/or activities under any of the following circumstances:
  - a. Any victim of the offender is a member of GCC or known to regularly attend any GCC services.
  - b. The offender has a history of not following established contract agreements at other churches.
  - c. The offender does not comply with the conditions of this Policy.
8. Offenders are prohibited from upfront public ministry including: church leadership, participating in the praise team or choir, or any other outward facing ministry such as serving communion.
9. Testimonies at GCC services are permitted if the testimony is written and approved by the Senior Pastor and Elder Board Chair. This does not apply to testimonies at Life Groups.
10. The Pastors, Elders, and Staff will be notified of the offender status.
11. Offenders can join a Men's Life Group (if male), a Women's Life Group (if female) or a Couples Life Group, except when the group meets in a home where children under the age of 18 reside, without the permission of the host.
12. The offender will not enter a restroom where children are present without a children's ministry representative present with that child/children.

13. The offender is prohibited from entering the children's ministry wing of the church, including the playground, when children are present or expected to be present. If the offender's own children are attending GCC and are present and participating in GCC'S children's or youth ministry or activities, the offender will not go beyond the children's check-in desk. This prohibition continues to exist regardless of whether the offender status is removed.
14. The Attendance Agreement for Sex Offenders included with this Policy is an integral part of this Policy.
15. The offender may become a member of GCC.
16. Because GCC firmly believes that God forgives our sins if we are repentant, after the offender has been removed from the Sex Offender Registry, the Board of Elders has the authority to make a recommendation to release the offender from any or all elements of this Policy, though such a release is not guaranteed.

## **Grace Community Church of Fort Mill (GCC)**

### **Attendance Agreement for Sex Offenders**

I agree to the following conditions:

1. I will meet with a minimum of 2 Elders for support, prayer, and to share my story concerning the events that led to being placed on the Sex Offender Registry.
2. If applicable, I will obtain written approval from my Probation Officer to attend GCC and submit this approval to the Board of Elders. Additionally, I will provide contact information for my Probation Officer to the Board of Elders.
3. I agree to have my name, picture, and documentation of all Court proceedings detailing my offense, conviction, and current status distributed to all GCC pastors, elders, staff, and Life Group Leader, as applicable, before attending a GCC service or activity.
4. I understand that I cannot serve or participate, in any capacity, in an upfront ministry, children's ministry, youth ministry, mission activity where children are present, or leadership role at GCC.
5. I acknowledge and agree that the children's ministry wing of the church is off limits when children are present or expected to be present. If my own children are attending GCC and are present and participating in GCC's children or youth ministry or activities, I will not go beyond the children's check-in desk.
6. I will promptly leave any area on GCC property where children are present, with the exception of a populated church foyer, sanctuary, or any other area where five or more adults are present.
7. I will not attend a GCC life group at a home without the permission of the host.
8. I will not visit the home of a GCC family, where children are present, as a representative of GCC, in any capacity, without the parents knowing my history and offense level and giving permission for my entry to their home.
9. I will not have any physical contact with a child at GCC, including, without limitation, sitting next to a child other than my own, holding a child on my lap, or being hugged or kissed by a child at GCC. If a child other than my own approaches me to talk, I can acknowledge him or her and will promptly leave the area.
10. I will not enter a restroom where children are present without a children's ministry representative present with that child/children.
11. I have read and understand the GCC Sex Offender Policy and agree to abide by this Policy.
12. I accept that if I break any of the above conditions, I will no longer be allowed to be present at any GCC location or activity.

13. Grace Community Church of Fort Mill, inc., pastors, elders, staff, small group leaders, and GCC attendees are released from any legal responsibility or liability for disclosure of the above information to the extent indicated and authorized herein.

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

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Senior Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Senior Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Elder: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Elder: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_