



# Child Protection Policy

Faith Presbyterian Church  
Covington, Louisiana

Revised 2023-07-25

Rev. 2019-12-09<sup>1</sup>

Rev. 2021-05-25<sup>2</sup>

Rev. 2022-04-13

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<sup>1</sup> As per changes approved by the Session. See Session Meeting Minutes from 12/09/2019.

<sup>2</sup> As per changes approved by the Session

Dear parents and families of Faith Presbyterian,

Every week at FPC, we go out of our way to state and demonstrate publicly our belief that children are important to God and to us. The Scriptures are clear that children are a blessing not only to families, but also to the body of Christ. It is that love and understanding that have motivated us to develop this document.

We believe that the discipleship of children is a responsibility given by God to parents. The role of the Church, then, is two-fold: (1) to equip parents in that calling and (2) to supplement your ministry to your children. That supplemental ministry, at this stage in our church's development, consists of Sunday School, Children's Worship for children ages 6 months - 1st grade on Sunday mornings during worship, and childcare during specific events taking place during the week in the FPC facilities. It is our deep desire that through those avenues of ministry, your children will grow to trust Christ more deeply even at a young age.

It is of the utmost importance, then, that your children be allowed to learn of Christ's love in a safe environment. We cannot communicate Christ's love without also demonstrating it by protecting and nurturing your children. In the pages that follow, we outline with rigorous detail how we aim to keep your children safe, as we minister the Gospel to them. Not only will our Session hold our volunteers and staff accountable to this document, we invite you to do the same. The spiritual, physical, and emotional protection of our children is near to the heart of God and it is to ours as well.

We are glad to be partnered with you in the discipleship of our children.

In Christ alone,

The Session of Faith Presbyterian Church

RE Jonathan Crowder

RE Todd Fernandez

RE Harvey Marsolan

RE Ian Bowling

TE Jason D. Wood

## I. OVERVIEW

The Session of Faith Presbyterian Church (FPC) prayerfully adopts this Child Protection Policy in an effort to ensure that our children’s ministries conform to the Holy Scriptures (the only rule of faith and holy living), to the Constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, to the lawful mandates of the United States, the State Louisiana, and local authorities, and to the light of nature and Christian prudence.

These are complex issues, and we have done our best to adopt a simple, flexible policy that is best suited to our current needs as a community church with volunteer-led children’s ministries. We invite feedback and ideas on ways to improve and strengthen this policy to ensure that we as a church are living up to the ideals we profess. And we commit ourselves to revising the policy as our church grows and our needs change.

We encourage all persons to ask any questions and share with us any concerns they may have regarding the care and safety of our children. We also ask our church to pray to the Lord that he would bless us with wisdom in these matters, that he would be pleased through his Holy Spirit to build up the faith of our little ones, and that his restraining hand would protect them from evil at all times and in all places.

## II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES: MORAL THEOLOGY, LEGAL NORMS, AND WISE PRACTICES

### A. Moral Theology

We learn from the Bible that although man was created to glorify and enjoy God,<sup>2</sup> our first parents sinned against God, so that all mankind has fallen into guilt and thorough corruption.<sup>3</sup> Thankfully, God in his mercy has given us new life in his Son, Jesus Christ, who with his blood has fully satisfied for our sins and redeemed us from the power of the devil, and he so preserves his elect that without the will of our heavenly Father not a hair can fall from our heads.<sup>4</sup> We receive this forgiveness and newness of life by faith.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC) q.1 & scripture proofs.

<sup>3</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC) qq.13-19 & scripture proofs.

<sup>4</sup> WSC qq.11, 20-34 & scripture proofs; Heidelberg Catechism (HC) q.1 & scripture proofs.

<sup>5</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) ch.7, §3 & scripture proofs; WSC q.30 & scripture proofs; HC qq.20, 30 & scripture proofs.

Jesus always did what was right, not only outwardly but also in his heart.<sup>6</sup> As we trust in God, the Holy Spirit renews our hearts more and more after the likeness of God, and brings forth holy obedience to God's commandments in our lives.<sup>7</sup> Among other things, the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture tells us that

- we should not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body, but help and be a friend to him in every bodily need,<sup>8</sup>
- we should lead a chaste and decent life in words and deeds,<sup>9</sup>
- we should show honor to willingly obey the lawful commands of the civil authorities,<sup>10</sup> and
- we should not lie about, slander, or defame our neighbor,<sup>11</sup>
- in short, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>12</sup>

However, some members of the church are not truly converted,<sup>13</sup> and in this life even those converted to Christ do not keep God's law perfectly.<sup>14</sup> Also, the church calls those outside to repentance and faith, and joyfully receives them as members upon their profession and baptism.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, children are uniquely vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse.<sup>16</sup> Thus, it is no surprise that

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<sup>6</sup> WCF ch.8, §§ 3-5 & scripture proofs; WLC q.48 & scripture proofs.

<sup>7</sup> WCF ch. 13 & scripture proofs.

<sup>8</sup> Sixth Commandment; WLC qq.134-136 & scripture proofs; Luther's Small Catechism.

<sup>9</sup> Seventh Commandment; WLC qq.137-139 & scripture proofs; WCF ch. 24, § 1 & scripture proofs; Luther's Small Catechism.

<sup>10</sup> Fifth Commandment; WCF ch. 23, § 1 & scripture proofs; WLC q.127 & scripture proofs; HC q.104 & scripture proofs; Luther's Small Catechism.

<sup>11</sup> Ninth Commandment; WLC qq.143-145 & scripture proofs.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 22:37,39 ESV.

<sup>13</sup> WLC q.61 & scripture proofs.

<sup>14</sup> WLC q.149 & scripture proofs; HC q.114 & scripture proofs.

<sup>15</sup> WCF ch. 28, § 1 & scripture proofs; WLC qq.165-166 & scripture proofs; EPC Book of Worship (BW) § 3-2(F).

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Ex.1:15-22; Matt. 2:16-18.

some who attend our church, whether members or visitors, may have a past that includes improper or unhealthy thoughts or behavior toward children.

Accordingly, special measures to protect children from wrongdoing (not only from those outside the church, but also by those within the church) are wise and necessary. Not every person is gifted with the graces and disposition for teaching children or serving in children's ministry.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the Bible teaches that those who by God's ordinance have authority over children, whether in the church or in the home, have special duty to ensure their safety and protection, and to set a holy and wise example for them.<sup>18</sup>

## **B. Legal Norms**

### **1. The EPC Constitution**

The EPC Constitution places the Government of FPC in the hands of the Session, under the review and control of higher courts.<sup>19</sup> Among other things, the local church is to provide for the nurture of its members, to provide the sacraments, and to teach the faith.<sup>20</sup> The Session has authority and responsibility for overseeing FPC's worship and ministries, for monitoring the conduct of members, for reminding parents of their responsibility for spiritual instruction, for establishing Sunday schools and Bible classes, for overseeing the educational program of the congregation and approving its literature, and for doing whatever else is necessary for the wellbeing of the church.<sup>21</sup> The EPC recognizes that parents play a primary role in the spiritual nurture of the church's children.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to assigning the superintendence of the affairs of FPC to the Session, the EPC Constitution assigns to the Session (and in the case of the

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<sup>17</sup> See Eph. 4:7, 11.

<sup>18</sup> WLC qq.129-130 & scripture proofs.

<sup>19</sup> EPC Book of Government (BG) chs. 2, 18.

<sup>20</sup> BG § 4-4(B).

<sup>21</sup> BG § 18-3.

<sup>22</sup> BG § 4-4(A).

Pastor, assigns to the Presbytery) the responsibility of handling ecclesiastical judicial procedures.<sup>23</sup> The Book of Discipline states:

“Not everything displeasing to God is a ground for ecclesiastical judicial procedures. Offenses which require discipline are three kinds: Heresy, which consists of holding beliefs, doctrines, or practices contrary to the Scriptures and condemned in the subordinate standards; Immorality; and Contempt for the established order of the church.”<sup>24</sup>

The Book of Discipline recognizes, however, that improper or inappropriate behavior that fall short of this definition may nevertheless have consequences for a person’s ability to volunteer or work for the church, including in the church’s children ministries.<sup>25</sup> This policy therefore provides for addressing concerns that fall outside the scope of ecclesiastical judicial procedures. Also, the Session retains the power to place limitations on a person’s contact with children apart from ecclesiastical judicial procedures.<sup>26</sup>

## 2. Louisiana Law

The primary legislation that affects the ministries of FPC is the Louisiana Children’s Code, which provides that **pastors, teachers, and child care providers are mandatory reporters of child abuse**. LA. CHILDREN’S CODE arts. 603(17)(c)-(d) & 609–11; LA. REV. STAT. § 14:403. Louisiana Revised Statutes title 14, § 403, Louisiana Children’s Code articles 603 and 609 through 611, and Louisiana Code of Evidence article 511, are set forth verbatim at the end of this document.

To ensure and encourage compliance, adults who participate in FPC’s children’s ministries shall be required to undergo training on the requirements of Louisiana law in this respect. In short, conduct toward children that meets the statutory definition of abuse must be reported immediately to the Louisiana Department of Children & Family Services, state or local law enforcement, or both.

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<sup>23</sup> BG chs.1, 3.

<sup>24</sup> EPC Book of Discipline (BD) § 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> See BD § 1-3; BG § 18-3.

<sup>26</sup> See BG § 18-3.

In addition to these provisions of State law, the Session is committed to conforming its conduct and the practice of those involved in FPC's children's ministries, as far as possible without violating Scripture, to whatever federal, state, or local law may further require. For example, a federal court order may limit contact with children for a person convicted of a sex offense in federal court; FPC will abide by such orders.<sup>27</sup>

### **C. Wise Practices**

A crucial component of this Child Protection Policy is common sense. Those who participate in our children's ministries should avoid placing themselves in a situation where their integrity or the propriety of their conduct can be questioned, where a child with limited understanding may perceive something inappropriate, or where a loving and cautious parent might express concern. To cultivate this common sense, *the Session will require training for those who participate in our children's ministries. Parents are welcome to attend this training so that they are aware of its content.*

FPC also wants to strike the right balance of encouraging anyone to voice any concern they may have about the safety or care of children while nevertheless discouraging gossip, rumors, and falsehoods.

#### **I. COMMUNICATING GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Session shall ensure that adults who participate in FPC's children's ministries understand this policy. *Parents are invited to review it. All are invited to suggest revisions.*

FPC should offer age-appropriate training for children in abuse prevention, but no child shall be allowed to attend such training without the express written permission of the child's parents or guardians.

A copy of this policy should be posted on the FPC website. Paper copies should be available at the door of the FPC's child classrooms and nursery room.

#### **II. SCREENING**

All staff (volunteer or paid) of FPC children's ministries will be screened using the following procedures:

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<sup>27</sup> The Session reserves the right to support such a person's request to modify such an order in appropriate circumstances, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3583(e)(2).

- A. Background check. All prospective staff and volunteers must complete and consent to have a criminal background check conducted. Individuals who have been arrested for, charged with, are on deferred adjudication or regular probation for, or who have been convicted of crimes that are sex- or abuse-related, whether misdemeanor or felony, may not serve in any area of children's ministry.
- B. Retention. The background check for each staff member and volunteer will be repeated every two (2) years.
- C. Limitation and revocation. FPC shall revoke or limit any staff member and volunteer's service in FPC's children's ministries whenever the Session considers it best to do so.

### III. TRAINING

FPC shall provide training for the staff and volunteers of FPC's children's ministries in child protection and child abuse prevention. We currently require the Ministry Safe Awareness Training. Others may include, among other things, the training provided by the Louisiana Department of Children & Family Services online. Currently, this training is available at: <https://moodle.dcms.la.gov/login/index.php>.

### IV. SPECIFIC POLICIES

#### A. General Policies

Staff and volunteers of FPC's children's ministries should follow these rules:

1. The role of the lead teacher in Children's Sunday School and Children's Worship will be filled only by Active Members, Affiliate Members, or Staff of Faith Presbyterian Church. Non-members may serve as Assistants in these classes.
2. Punctuality and Responsibility. Staff and Volunteers should arrive no later than fifteen (15) minutes before the start of the activity. During this time, they should ensure that the classroom is ready for the arrival of children. Staff or volunteers must remain at the children's ministry event until the last child has been picked up by their parent. If a volunteer must miss an event for which they were scheduled to serve, the volunteer must call their schedule coordinator to inform them of their absence. Volunteers must make every attempt to find a substitute from the provided list of



children's workers. **If he or she is unable to find a substitute, the volunteer must contact his or her schedule coordinator.**

3. Two teachers in room. Two adults should remain together in a classroom at all times (or in adjacent rooms with both doors open). If an adult needs to leave a classroom, another children's ministry staff or volunteer should step in. If only one adult on the classroom, then the classroom door must remain open.
4. Open door policy. Classroom doors should remain open or must always allow for visibility from the outside (Dutch doors, half glass, glass, etc). (The narthex complies with this policy even when the doors to the sanctuary are closed because it is enclosed in glass. Also, a door may be partially closed to reduce noise.)
5. The use of electronics. Electronic devices are necessary for childcare staff to communicate with parents, especially nursery staff. Occasionally, the curriculum might call for teachers to use their devices to play songs or show an image. This type of use is appropriate as directed by the curriculum. **However, staff and volunteers should refrain from the use of any electronic device that might distract their attention away from the children.**
6. Appropriate touch. Appropriate touch is part of a healthy ministry.
  - a. Using good judgment, the following may be appropriate ways to touch kids:
    - an arm around the shoulder
    - walking hand in hand
    - carrying small children piggy-back
    - short congratulatory or greeting hugs
    - a brief, assuring pat on the back or shoulder
    - handshake and high-fives
  - b. NEVER
    - touch a child in anger
    - touch a child in any manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive

- touch a child between the bellybutton and the shin (other than diaper changing with parental permission)
  - touch a child's private parts (other than diaper changing with parental permission)
  - allow a non-nursery child to sit in your lap
  - allow a child to touch you between the belly button and shin
6. Taboo topics. Topics including, but not limited to the following, are best discussed as part of the official curriculum of Faith Presbyterian Church taught by a Pastor or Elder or left for parents to discuss with their children:
- Circumcision
  - Human sexuality or reproduction
  - Female menstrual cycle
  - Gratuitous descriptions of violence or death
7. General Check-in. Children will be signed in through our check-in program by a parent or guardian. The child(ren) will get a security sticker with his/her name and information on it, and the parent will keep a matching security sticker that will be needed for check-out. Children will be met at the appropriate door and greeted by the staff or volunteer.
8. General Check-out. A child should not be released to someone other than the parents or guardians for Sunday School/Worship/All events. If an adult other than the parents or guardians attempts to sign out a child, an Elder of the Session must be notified to make the decision to release the child. All volunteers must check to ensure the child's security sticker number matches the number on the parent's security sticker before dismissing the child to them. If the parent has lost their sticker, they will need to get another sticker printed for them by the volunteer at the check in/out desk and the verification made in the classroom before the child can be dismissed. If the only child left has a parent that is currently serving, the volunteer will bring that child to their parent.
9. Food Policy. To ensure the safety of children who may have food allergies, parents will be asked to provide information about their children's allergies using our check-in software. These allergies must be noted on children's security stickers.

As a general rule, food is not served in Sunday School or Children's Church. Parents may provide baby food, snacks, or bottles for children who are in the Infant or Toddler rooms.

An exception to our “no food policy” may be made when it directly relates to a specific lesson in Children’s Sunday School (not Children’s Worship). When a teacher wishes to use food, he or she must coordinate with the Children’s Director in advance. In the circumstance that a child has a registered allergy, their parents should be notified no later than the Thursday before the class in which food will be served. **(See attached template)** These children may bring a substitute snack. Additionally, the Children’s Ministry Director will make sure to post a notification of which food and class will be served by the check-in station as a notification to visitors. **(See attached template)**

Teachers are not permitted to serve food, if notification is not made to the Children’s Director by the Wednesday before.

10. Outdoor activity policy. Once children are signed into their respective classrooms, children are to remain indoors until signed out by parents. As a general rule, outdoor activities are not permitted. However, exceptions may be granted by the event coordinator.

## **B. Nursery/Toddler Policies**

In the nursery, staff and volunteers must meet these expectations:

1. Nursery/Toddler Check in policy. Children will be signed in through our check in program by a parent or guardian. The child(ren) will get a security sticker with his/her name and information on it, and the parent will keep a matching security sticker that will be needed for check out. Staff and volunteers will ensure they have a phone number to contact the parent during the activity, if needed. Parents will be asked if the staff or volunteers are permitted to change the child’s diaper if the need arises.
1. Age requirement. Unless express permission is granted by the team leader in charge of children’s ministry, *volunteers must be at least 16 years of age to volunteer in the nursery. Additionally, at least one staff or volunteer must be at least 18 years old.*
2. Diapering procedure. All children must have their diaper checked during their time in the nursery. If the parent has not agreed to have staff or volunteers change the diaper, the child should be returned to the parent for changing. Volunteers are not to move from the changing table once a child has been placed there for changing a diaper. Staff and volunteers must gather materials before placing the child on the changing table, and should always keep one hand on the child to prevent falls. Staff and volunteers must wear disposable gloves while changing diapers and must wear new gloves with each change. Staff and Volunteers must dispose of

dirty diapers in provided diaper pail. Staff and Volunteers must disinfect diaper changing area after each diaper change. Staff and Volunteers must disinfect their hands after changing each diaper.

3. Potty-training and bathroom policy. Parents should encourage their children to go to the restroom prior to their time in the nursery. If a child needs to go to the restroom during this time period, a staff or volunteer must accompany the child to the restroom and must check the restroom prior to the child using the facility. While the child is using the facility, the door must be propped open a little, and an adult must wait for the child outside the bathroom and escort them back to class. Potty-training children should ordinarily use the bathroom between the Toddler Room and Pre K/K Room.
4. Room clean-up policy. It is the responsibility of the staff and volunteers to disinfect and put away all toys and equipment used in the nursery area at the close of the service. It is also their responsibility to take out the trash and empty the diaper pail in the classroom.
5. Nursery/Toddler Check out policy. A child should not be released to someone other than the parents or guardians for Sunday School/Worship/All Events. If an adult other than the parents or guardians attempts to check out a child, an Elder of the Session must be notified to make the decision to release the child. All volunteers must check to ensure the child's security sticker number matches with the parent's security sticker number before dismissing the child to them. If the parent has lost their security sticker, the parent will need to get another sticker printed by the volunteer at the check in/out desk and the verification made in the classroom before the child can be dismissed. If the only child left has a parent that is currently serving, the volunteer will bring that child to their parent.

### **C. Children's Worship Policies**

In Children's Worship, staff and volunteers must meet these expectations:

1. Worship Check-in. When children are dismissed to Children's Worship, *visiting* parents will accompany children to the Children and Youth Discipleship Building to register, while others who regularly attend and are checked in will be accompanied to the classroom by FPC staff or volunteers.

2. Bathroom policy. Parents should encourage their children to go to the restroom prior to their time in class. If a child needs to go to the restroom during this time period, a staff or volunteer must accompany the child to the restroom and must check the restroom prior to the child using the facility. While the child is using the facility, the door must be propped open and an adult must wait for the child outside of the bathroom and escort them back to class. If only one adult is in the classroom, then the classroom door must remain open.

#### **D. Sunday School Policy - All Classes**

1. Sunday School Check-in. Children will be signed in through our check in program by a parent or guardian. The child(ren) will get a security sticker with his/her name and information on it, and the parent will keep a matching security sticker that will be needed for check out.
6. Bathroom policy. Parents should encourage their children to go to the restroom prior to their time in class. If a child needs to go to the restroom during this time period, a staff or volunteer must accompany the child to the restroom and must check the restroom prior to the child using the facility. While the child is using the facility, the door must be propped open and an adult must wait for the child outside of the bathroom and escort them back to class. If there is only one adult in the classroom, the classroom door must remain open.
7. Sunday school Check-out. A child should not be released to someone other than the parents or guardians. If an adult other than the parents or guardians attempts to sign out a child, an Elder of the Session must be notified to make the decision to release the child. All volunteers must check to ensure the child's security sticker number matches the parent's security sticker number before dismissing the child to them. If the parent has lost their security sticker, they will need to get another security sticker printed by the volunteer at the check in/out desk and the verification made in the classroom before the child can be dismissed. If the only child left has a parent that is currently serving, the volunteer will bring that child to their parent.

#### **E. Emergencies**

In case of an emergency, do the following:

1. Medical concerns. Call 911 if necessary. Immediately report any medical needs or concerns to an Elder or the schedule coordinator. The teacher

should remain calm and divert the attention of the other children. As a staff member or volunteer at Faith, you are not authorized to make decisions in lieu of a child's parent. In case of an emergency, staff and volunteers should return children to their parents.

8. Weather alert. If there is a fear of dangerous weather, staff and volunteers should wait for an Elder, pastor, or the schedule coordinator to instruct them in what to do. In no way should a staff and volunteer act in such a way as to incite panic among children or other members of the staff and volunteers.
9. Tornado. In the event of a tornado warning, the volunteers should lead the children to the hallway and have them face the wall, curl into a ball, and cover their heads with their hands. For children too young to remain in a ball on the floor, the volunteers will cover them as best as possible to block potential flying debris. The Nursery and Toddler rooms will take cover in the vestibule outside their classrooms. PreK – Youth classrooms will take cover in the hallway outside the Elementary classrooms.
10. Fire. The first priority in any case of a fire is that all children, staff and volunteers' safety is maintained. Any attempt by staff and volunteers to put out a fire is absolutely forbidden unless judgment to do so is unquestionable and presents no possible danger to anyone present. In the event of a fire, an alarm will sound. Teachers are asked to lead children from the building through the nearest marked exit away from the fire. Volunteers are to lead the children across the parking lot to the bushes alongside the property line by the subdivision. They will continue to lead the children to the walled area in front of the subdivision and use it as a rear blockage. Volunteers will act as the blockade closing up the opening to keep the children safe. Staff, volunteers, and children should remain in that safe place until parents, law enforcement, fire department, or paramedics arrive and give the order to move. Parents will come to them to gather their children. Staff and volunteers, please stress the following rules:
  - Absolutely no talking.
  - Absolutely no running.
  - Follow the teacher's lead.
11. Earthquake. In case of an earthquake, staff and volunteers should gather the children under sturdy tables or desks for their protection. Staff,

volunteers and children should remain in that safe place until parents, law enforcement, or paramedics arrive.

12. Missing child. In the event that a child is missing, an Elder or a pastor should be notified. The teacher should then continue the search and notify parents. All should remain calm and rational while moving in as timely a manner as possible.
13. Media response. In the event of a severe accident, it is likely that the media will be onsite to cover the incident. If asked by a media member for a statement, please direct them to the Pastor or an Elder.
14. Active Shooter (violent persons, gunfire, etc.). In case of threats by an individual, volunteers should take the following steps to ensure children's safety until (A) law enforcement has arrived on the scene and given the order to move or (B) a parent arrives to retrieve them.
  - a. Run/Evacuate – if the intruder/gunman is NOT in the children's building,
    - Leave all belongings in the classroom
    - The volunteers will lead the children out the door closest to the side parking lot towards the bushes by the subdivision. There will be a ribbon on one of the bushes that will allow for a path through the bushes.
    - The volunteers will lead the children into the subdivision on the other side of the guard house.
    - Call 911 as soon as all are out of harm's way
    - Staff, volunteers, and children should remain in that safe place until parents, law enforcement, or paramedics arrive and give the order to move. Parents will come to them to gather their children.
  - b. Hide Out – If evacuation is not possible, make sure:
    - The classroom doors are locked and barricaded,
    - The blinds on the windows are closed,
    - The children are on the wall that is outside of the site of the active shooter.

- If possible, put some paper over the door window and turn the lights out.
  - Stay as low to the floor as possible and remain quiet and still.
  - Avoid areas that do not provide barriers or restrict your options for movement.
  - Silence your cell phones and turn off all sources of noise
  - Dial 911, if possible, to alert the police to an active shooter and provide location, if known.
  - If you cannot speak, leave the line open so the dispatcher can hear
  - Staff, volunteers, and children should remain in that safe place until parents, law enforcement, or paramedics arrive and give the order to move. Parent will come to them to gather their children.
- c. Fight/Take Action – as a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt or incapacitate the active shooter by:
- Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her
  - Throwing items and improvising weapons
  - Yelling
  - Working as a team with others and committing to your actions to hurt the individual
  - Staff, volunteers, and children should remain in that safe place until parents, law enforcement, or paramedics arrive and give the order to move. Parents will come to them to gather their children.

## **F. Discipline**

Physical discipline, such as spanking, is never permitted. Using non-violent physical restraint to prevent a child from doing something disruptive or dangerous is permitted and may, in some instances, be necessary. Affirmation



and encouragement is always encouraged. Appropriate training will advise staff and volunteers on the best age-appropriate discipline methods.

Follow these rules for discipline:

1. Consistency. Maintain consistency in handling discipline problems. Discipline must be consistent to be effective. Do not threaten a consequence unless you intend to follow through. At the beginning of class, remind your class of the guidelines.
15. Response. Make a prompt and personal response to inappropriate behavior. Correct a behavior the first time and every time.
16. Resolution. Seek both a resolution and reconciliation.
17. Reward. Acknowledge and reward positive behavior. Encourage children who are behaving and following the rules.
18. Plan. Plan your lessons thoroughly. Often the best deterrent to a discipline policy is a well-planned class.
19. Pray. Pray for your kids and your patience consistently. Ask the Lord to guide you throughout the class.
20. Discipline Steps. If discipline is warranted, it is appropriate for you to place the child in "time out" away from the center of class activity (but still in the classroom). A rule of thumb for length of time out is one minute per year of age. Discuss the infraction with the child and remind the child that he/she needs to be obedient. For repeated disciplinary violations, parents may be summoned at the discretion of the classroom teacher in charge

## V. **Handling Incidents**

### A. **Abuse or Suspected Abuse**

Louisiana law defines abuse as follows:

"Abuse" means any one of the following acts which seriously endanger the physical,

mental, or emotional health and safety of the child:

1. The infliction, attempted infliction, or, as a result of inadequate supervision, the allowance of the infliction or attempted infliction of

physical or mental injury upon the child by a parent or any other person.

2. The exploitation or overwork of a child by a parent or any other person, including but not limited to commercial sexual exploitation of the child.
3. The involvement of the child in any sexual act with a parent or any other person, or the aiding or toleration by the parent, caretaker, or any other person of the child's involvement in any of the following:
  - (i) Any sexual act with any other person.
  - (ii) Pornographic displays.
  - (iii) Any sexual activity constituting a crime under the laws of this state.
4. A coerced abortion conducted upon a child.

LA. CHILDREN'S CODE art. 603(2). Such abuse must be reported immediately to the Louisiana Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS), state or local law enforcement, or both. The failure of a mandated reporter to do so is a crime. Paid and volunteer staff must comply. The Louisiana Child Protection Hotline is 1-855-452-5437 (855-4LAKids).

In addition, the Session urges staff and volunteers to report child abuse or suspected abuse to the Session so that the Session can take action to ensure the safety of children. Reporting abuse to the Session does **not** satisfy the requirement of Louisiana law that such abuse be reported by mandated reporters to DCFS, law enforcement, or both. Again, training will enable staff and volunteers to appropriately recognize the signs of abuse.

## **B. Inappropriate behavior**

Christ teaches us in Matthew 18 to take up our personal grievances with one another before referring them to the rest of the church.

*"If your brother sins *against you*, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."*<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Matt. 18:15-17 ESV (emphasis added).

The EPC Book of Discipline, however, provides that these steps need not be taken where prosecution under ecclesiastical judicial procedures “is instituted by the court.”<sup>29</sup>

Accordingly, behavior *toward children* should be reported promptly to the Session if it is inappropriate—even if it falls short of the statutory definition of child abuse. The matter need not be addressed first under Matthew 18.

A member of the Session who receives such a report shall promptly share the report with other members of the Session for collective action. The Session should promptly look into the matter and take action as appropriate.

Ecclesiastical judicial procedures may be implicated, but the Session may limit or revoke a person’s participation in FPC’s children’s ministries apart from such procedures.

Consistent with the Book of Discipline, a member of the Session against whom a report of inappropriate behavior is made shall be disqualified from participating as a Session member in the disposition of the report or voting on the consequences of the report.<sup>30</sup>

#### **A. Support and care**

Staff, volunteers, and parents should encourage and support one another in their perennial efforts to provide better care and training for the children of FPC.

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<sup>29</sup> BD § 6-5.

<sup>30</sup> BD § 9-1(H).

## **Food Notification Template**

Parents of children in (insert class name) this is to notify you that on Sunday, (insert date) we will serve (insert food) to the children as part of the Sunday School lesson. If your child has allergies associated with this food, please provide a safe substitute for your child so that he/she can actively participate in the lesson. Please contact (insert teacher name and phone number) if you have any questions or concerns.

*Print on bright red paper and post by check-in stations*

# ***PLEASE READ!!!!***

The children in (insert class name) will be served (insert food) today as part of their Sunday School lesson. Please be sure to let the teacher know if your child has any allergies associated with this food.

Thank you,  
Brittany Rucker