



**Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
Asheville, NC**

Session Approved September 28, 2021

**GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (GCPC)
CHILD, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY**

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SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we believe that God creates us to live in community with one another. We understand that life in the church is to be lived according to the rule of love. Jesus said,

You shall love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the greatest commandment.

And a second is like it.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew 22:37-39

As members of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church (GCPC), we are called to create a loving community of faith that seeks the welfare of its members and guests. Therefore, we are committed to the protection of all minors and vulnerable adults participating in the activities and programs of GCPC. Abuse, exploitation, or harassment in any form--physical, emotional, or sexual--will not be tolerated.

As part of our congregation's baptismal vows, we covenant with each other to take responsibility for the nurture of faith. As such, the members of this church have pledged to uphold one another. In the spirit of Christ, we teach, strengthen, and support the individual's relationship with the Church Family.

GCPC is committed to the sanctity of all people. A well-implemented protection policy not only protects minors and vulnerable adults, but also adults who minister to children.

This Child and Youth Protection Policy covers any person employed by or volunteering at GCPC in any capacity involving children and all outside organizations using GCPC facilities for child and youth programs.

Relationships and the Ministry of the Church

Building healthy relationships is an important component of our ministry with young people. More than doctrine or activities, it is through relationships with their Christian peers and with healthy Christian adults that minors understand the love of God, recognize the gift of grace, embrace God's diverse creation, and get inspired to serve others in God's name. It is also crucial that the church be intentional about the building of relationships between young people, vulnerable adults and their pastors, Christian educators, Sunday school teachers, youth advisors, elder mentors, and others. Because these relationships are sacred, appropriateness within them is imperative. A good policy lifts up and supports appropriate adult/youth relationships such as these.

It is also important to recognize that this policy is designed as a tool specifically for the programmatic ministries of the church. These programs are a part, but not the whole, of the relational ministry that is the work of the body of Christ. Relationships between adults and youth that are built within our ministry programs are done so with appropriate parameters as outlined by the policy. Yet we know that these relationships can and sometimes do live on beyond a person's time in youth group, Sunday school, pastoral care or beyond an adult's time as a youth advisor, teacher, or mentor. It is not the intention or design of the policy to constrain all relationships adults have with minors and vulnerable adults in our congregation. On the contrary, the church should encourage appropriate intergenerational relationships between members to flourish. As these relationships between children, youth and vulnerable adults and adults in our congregation continue to grow outside of our ministry programs, they do so at the discretion and direction of the parents and families/caregivers of our

minors and vulnerable adults.

SECTION TWO

PURPOSE, APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

A. Purpose

1. To provide a safe and secure environment for minors and vulnerable adults at GCPC.
2. To protect minors and vulnerable adults from sexual, physical, and emotional abuse while participating in GCPC activities.
3. To guide GCPC as an institution in the conduct of its employees and volunteers and to prevent incidents and allegations of abuse.

B. Applicability

1. This policy addresses five (5) components of the protection of minors and vulnerable adults:
 - a. Procedures and a code of conduct for all employees and volunteers of GCPC.
 - b. Reporting of incidents of abuse/neglect/dependency.
 - c. Responding to incidents of abuse/neglect/dependency.
 - d. Screening of applicants for employment and volunteer service for a history of behavior potentially detrimental to minors and vulnerable adults.
 - e. Training of employees and volunteers in the protection of minors and vulnerable adults.
2. This policy applies to all persons, whether GCPC employees or volunteers, participating in all programs of GCPC, including but not limited to:
 - a. Children Programs: Education Hour Programs (Children's Center Sunday School and The Promise Zone), Children's Choir, Worship and other special events
 - b. Youth Programs: Education Hour Classes, Youth Fellowship, Youth Conferences and Mission Trips, Retreat Weekends, Confirmation, Treble Choir and other special events
 - c. Church sponsored retreats, mission trips, conferences, *etc.*
 - d. All staff and volunteers of GCPC are governed by this policy, which supersedes all prior GCPC child protection policy statements or policies. With regard to any employee or volunteer of GCPC, perceived conflicts or ambiguities in interpretation and application of this policy shall be resolved by the Personnel Council and Pastor. An obligation to abide by the policy will be written into the contract of each employee.

C. Scope

1. All employees and volunteers shall abide by the policy.
2. An individual may be terminated from employment and/or volunteer service for failure to observe and abide by this policy. This action may be taken regardless of the outcome of any investigation.
3. Each person must assume responsibility for his/her own actions in working with children, youth and vulnerable adults and for attending training offered on children, youth and vulnerable adults protection.
4. Employees and volunteers must assume responsibility for the actions of other employees and volunteers around them working with minors and vulnerable adults to ensure a safe environment for all.

SECTION THREE

PROCEDURES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

A. Procedures

1. Supervision

All minor's activities must be supervised by two adult leaders (ministerial staff, childcare staff, and/or volunteers) at all times. The presence of two leaders is to protect minors against situations in which abuse might occur. Best practice is that the two leaders are non-related.

2. Classrooms

Each classroom or office where minors and vulnerable adults are served shall have a door with a window in it or a half door. If it does not, and two leaders are not present in the room, then the door must remain open at all times. Any counseling session with a minor or vulnerable adult shall be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

3. Online Programming

All online programming and interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will abide by the two adult rule. Zoom breakout rooms should be treated like a room in the church. There should be two adults present when a youth is present. Pastoral counseling with a youth online should be done with an adult nearby and with two adults present. If it is not possible for two adults to be present in the counseling session, GCPC staff must discuss safety protocols with parents and make arrangements for another adult to be nearby. GCPC staff must keep at least one other staff member up to date on any counseling relationship with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

4. Restroom Use

Pre-school age minors shall be accompanied to the restroom by an adult who shall wait outside the door for the child. If assisting younger minors in the bathroom, the doors to the facility must remain open.

If on-site at GCPC, elementary school age minors may go to the restroom on their own or choose a same-gender "buddy" to accompany them to the restroom. The minor's teacher shall be informed of their destination at the time of exiting and returning to the classroom.

If off-site, all minors shall be accompanied to the restroom by an adult who shall wait outside the door or stall for the minor.

Concerning all minors, the child's teacher/other adult volunteer shall be informed of their destination at the time of exiting and returning to the classroom.

4. Overnight Activities

Male-identified participants and female-identified participants who are not direct family members shall be segregated during sleep times. If it is deemed necessary for adults to share sleeping accommodations with the minors, a minimum of two adults, preferably the same gender as the minors being chaperoned, shall sleep in each area. GCPC accommodates gender identity and fluidity in our practices. Any questions regarding the gender identity and/or fluidity of a minor shall be addressed by a Pastor.

5. Church Membership

Any volunteer working with minors and vulnerable adults through GCPC activities must be given permission by the church staff to participate and undergo the necessary background check. Church membership is not required, but encouraged.

6. Evaluation of the Policy

Pastors and the Personnel Council shall review the implementation of the "Child Protection Policy" and report their findings to Session at least one time annually.

B. Code of Conduct

1. GCPC employees and volunteers may not verbally, emotionally, physically, or sexually abuse minors or vulnerable adults.
2. Volunteers and staff will respect the rights of minors and vulnerable adults not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable and their right to say no.
3. GCPC employees and volunteers may not discipline minors or vulnerable adults by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
4. GCPC employees or volunteers shall never leave a minor unsupervised while participating in a program.
5. Only nursery staff, following nursery guidelines, will perform diapering. Any special needs for diapering and care of any minor will be arranged with parents and staff. Staff will be trained accordingly.
6. Employees and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of minors and vulnerable adults. Any signs of injury or possible abuse must be reported according to the GCPC Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.
7. Under no circumstances should employees or volunteers release a minor to leave the church premises to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized by parent or guardian.
9. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or being impaired by legally prescribed drugs during working hours or while volunteering is prohibited.
10. Smoking or use of tobacco in the presence of minors or parents during working hours or while volunteering is prohibited except in designated areas.

11. Profanity, inappropriate jokes, and any kind of harassment in the presence of minors or vulnerable adults or parents are prohibited.
12. Employees and volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting abuse and will attend training sessions on the subject, as instructed by the supervisor.
13. For all minors and vulnerable adults who have special needs (physical, developmental, or emotional), a plan for their care and ministry with them will be developed by the parents/caregiver of that minor or vulnerable adult and the pastoral or program staff person in charge of the program. Staff and volunteers working will be trained accordingly.

C. Telephonic or Electronic Communications with Minors

GCPC's employees and volunteers must include a staff member or parent in any telephonic or electronic communications with a child or youth (including cell phone, email, text-messaging, chatting, etc.) GCPC employees and volunteers shall not engage in one-on-one telephonic and/or electronic communications with any child unless the child's parent/guardian and at least one GCPC Pastor or the Director of Formation for Children, Youth, and Their Families is aware and has approved the communications. Given the unique pastoral relationship, GCPC Pastors shall inform another Pastor of the existence and substance of one-on-one communications with a minor without copying the other Pastor on the communications. If a GCPC employee or volunteer is contacted by a minor, the reply should include a parent or other Pastor copied. Questions about electronic or telephonic communications with minors should be addressed by a Pastor.

SECTION FOUR REPORTING

A. Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance to an employee or volunteer who witnesses a variance from the policies, procedures, and Code of Conduct as outlined in GCPC's Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, or who witness evidence of abuse or neglect.

The policies and procedures created for this protocol are important for the protection of minors and must be followed. We can all help each other to make sure a minor and vulnerable adult enjoy the safest environment possible.

We must also understand that there are legal obligations to notify civil authorities (i.e. law enforcement and/or the Department of Social Services) of evidence of abuse or neglect, whether those harms arose from within or from outside the church.

Adherence to our policies and procedures will be regulated within the church.

Evidence of actual abuse or neglect, however, must be reported to civil/legal authorities as well as to church personnel, resulting in a parallel response. We must take care to ensure that internal reporting requirements and responses will not interfere with any necessary civil investigation in any way.

This section will describe the types of situations that would require a report and provide guidance about how a report should be made and to whom.

B. Responding to Variances from Protection Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures outlined in this Child and Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy are designed to ensure the safety of all and therefore must be regularly followed. If an employee or volunteer observes another employee or volunteer vary from the Child and Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy in a manner that otherwise does not raise immediate concern for the safety of the minors or vulnerable adults, the observer ordinarily should remind the employee or volunteer, in a friendly manner of the correct procedure and ask that he or she follow it. Volunteers may bring concerns regarding variances to a supervising employee at any time even if the activity was not directly witnessed by the volunteer.

The observer thereafter should watch to ensure that the employee or volunteer adheres to the policy or procedure. If after being advised of the correct policy or procedure, the employee or volunteer continues to violate the protocol; such conduct must be reported to a supervising employee using the Incident Report Form.

So long as the observer has no additional concerns about the safety of a minor or vulnerable adult, a report to the Department of Social Services (DSS) ordinarily will not be required merely for failures to follow the policies and procedures contained within this protocol. However, if the observer has cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected; the observer must follow the procedures outlined in Paragraph C of Section Four.

C. Reporting Evidence of Abuse and Neglect

1. Abuse or Neglect Believed to Originate Within the Church

a. Initial report to DSS and to the Church Staff

If an employee or volunteer has cause to suspect that a minor or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected on church grounds and/or by an employee or volunteer of the church, the observer **MUST** report this both to the Buncombe County Department of Social Services and to a supervising employee of the church. The report to DSS is required by North Carolina law (see Attachment One) and must take priority over the report to the staff of the church.

Church Staff or other volunteers should not interfere with the legal obligation of the observer to report to DSS, nor should the observer allow a staff member to “pre-screen” a report to DSS.

The Hotline number for the
Buncombe County Department of Social Services is: **828-250-5900**.
(Note: 911 can also be called to reach DSS)

b. Reporting responsibility of the supervising employee

Once a report is made to a supervising employee, the employee **MUST**

- 1) Confirm that the observer has made contact with DSS. If not, the supervising employee must either collect the information and report to DSS or direct the observer to contact DSS.

- 2) Once DSS has been notified, it is the responsibility of the supervising employee to report the matter to a GCPC Pastor or the Director of Formation for Children, Youth, and Their Families . If the alleged perpetrator is a GCPC Pastor or the Director of Formation for Children, Youth, and Their Families , the report should be made to any other GCPC Pastor.
- 3) If the minor's parent or vulnerable adult's caregiver is not the alleged perpetrator, a parent/caregiver must be notified of the suspicious activity as soon as possible. The supervising staff member may report to the parent(s), or, if the internal report was made with sufficient speed, the appropriate church staff member or the Clerk of Session may notify a parent/caregiver of the suspicious activity. A parent/caregiver should know about the suspicious activity as early as possible, even if the supervising employee does not have the opportunity to report to a GCPC Pastor or the Director of Children's and Family Ministries.

Example: A minor or vulnerable adult approaches a volunteer and discloses that another volunteer employee of the church has touched her inappropriately. After gathering the necessary information, the observer should report to a supervising staff member if readily available. The observer should then call Buncombe County DSS and make a report. If a supervising employee is not readily available, the observer should not delay the call to DSS.

The supervising employee, once notified, should ask first whether the observer has contacted DSS. If not, the supervising employee should either direct the observer to make contact or collect the information and make the report personally. The supervising employee then should notify a GCPC Pastor or the Director of Children's and Family Ministries. A parent/caregiver should be notified as soon as possible, either by the supervising employee or by a GCPC Pastor or the Director of Children's and Family Ministries.

2. Abuse or Neglect Believed to Originate Outside of the Church

Although this policy primarily deals with making church-related activities as safe as possible, employees and volunteers must be prepared for the possibility of discovering evidence of abuse or neglect of a minor originating outside of the church. It is not uncommon for minors to make disclosures of abuse to trusted teachers or caregivers, or for abused minors to come to church showing physical signs of abuse.

An employee or volunteer, who has cause to suspect that a minor is being abused or neglected (even if not on church grounds (or not involving church employees and/or volunteers) **MUST** report this to the Buncombe County Department of Social Services. The legal obligation to report is not confined to church activities.

If the alleged perpetrator is not a parent/caregiver, a parent/caregiver must be informed as soon as possible. A report should also be made to a GCPC Pastor or the Director of Children's and Family Ministries.

The observer also may wish to speak to one or more of the Pastors so that the minor/vulnerable adult (or perhaps the perpetrator) might benefit from spiritual counseling. The observer should respect the privacy of the minor's/vulnerable adult's family. Such topics should never become a source of gossip amongst the members of the church.

Example: A Sunday school teacher observes multiple bruises on a minor in her class. She asks the minor about them, and the minor reluctantly admits that his mother's boyfriend came home drunk and hit him and his mother. The teacher must contact DSS and make a report. The teacher also should

contact the mother and let her know about her observations, even if the mother is not receptive, or even hostile, towards the report. Finally, the teacher should inform a GCPC Pastor or the Director of Children's and Family Ministries.

The teacher also asks other teachers and volunteers if they have noticed anything similar for purposes of making her report to DSS as well as to alert the other teachers to be looking for further signs. Under no circumstances, however, should the teacher discuss the matter with other members as a source of gossip.

D. Documentation of the Report

Single variances from minor protection policies that are corrected by a reminder to the violator do not need to be documented in writing. If variations persist, however, the conduct must be reported to a supervising employee and must be documented.

Either the observer or the supervising employee must fill out an Incident Report Form. This form should also document any remedial measures taken to correct the problem. If the violator is an employee, the form should be made a part of the employee's file.

Any case that causes a report to DSS must be thoroughly documented in writing. The report to DSS itself ordinarily is made orally. The social worker on-call will guide the observer through the call and gather as much information as possible. Once reported to DSS, either the observer or the supervising employee must fill out an Incident Report Form. This form should document the date of the DSS report and should further document all subsequent contacts and measures taken as part of the internal investigation.

A mere rules violation does not require a DSS report, but does require documentation using the Incident Report Form.

E. The Safety Valve of Common Sense

It is impossible to anticipate every possible scenario that might call for a response by a member of the staff or a volunteer to protect a minor/vulnerable adult. Although these procedures are necessary, their application must never interfere with the protection of our minors.

Situations may arise where the ideal reporting regimen cannot be followed. In those cases, common sense principles should be used to protect a minor. These principles are:

- The minor/vulnerable adult should be protected immediately from any further harm.
- If you have cause to suspect that a minor/vulnerable adult is abused or neglected, you **MUST** report this to the DSS.
- If the abuse involves the church, church officials must be notified and an investigation must be conducted.
- Injury to a minor or suspicion of an adult volunteer or employee should never be a source of gossip.
- Follow up with by completing the Incident Report Form as soon as able or practical.

Example: You are helping to coach a youth sports event held off church grounds when you observe inappropriate sexual contact between another church volunteer and a minor. There are no supervising

employees around, much less the Senior Pastor or the Clerk of Session. You need not wait to intervene. Stop the contact. Call the police. Tell a parent. Do all the necessary reporting after the minor is safe.

SECTION FIVE

RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT REPORT

Steps for Responding

In the event of an allegation of abuse, the following procedures are to be followed by all staff members and volunteers of GCPC.

1. Take every allegation seriously. Adequate care, respect, and confidentiality must be offered to alleged victims and perpetrators until the allegations can be substantiated or cleared.
2. Once the supervising employee receives an incident report, she/he must pass it on to a GCPC Pastor or the Director of Children's and Family Ministries. She/he must pass it on to the Senior Pastor and Personnel Council.
3. Observe the procedures in Section Four, Reporting, of this Policy.
4. Maintain meticulous written records using the Incident Report Form and include attachments as necessary.
5. The accused individual (employee or volunteer) will be suspended from his/her duties and prohibited from participating in all activities involving minors during the pendency of the investigation as outlined.

A. Incident Report Received/No Allegation of Abuse (Policy Variances)

A Responding Committee of four persons shall be formed. The Committee shall include the Senior Pastor, an Associate Pastor, the Clerk of Session or the Clerk of Session's designee - another active Session member. If the subject of the Report is an employee, a member of the Personnel Council will serve as the fourth member. If the subject is a volunteer, a member of Session will also serve as the fourth member.

The Responding Committee shall further investigate the Incident Report. If the investigation determines a variance from policy that does not appear to involve abuse, the Responding Committee will recommend administrative action up to and including dismissal or termination.

If the investigation determines abuse is suspected, it must be reported in conformity with Section Four, Reporting. If abuse is suspected and reported to the civil authorities, the Responding Committee must discontinue further active investigation and must report this to the Personnel Council (see paragraph 5B of section five).

Due to the length of some DSS investigations, the Personnel Council reserves the right to dissolve the relationship between GCPC and a volunteer or terminate employment of a staff member (in accordance with the Personnel Policy) at any time.

Additionally, due to the complexities of documenting and proving abuse, the Personnel Council reserves the right to dissolve the relationship between GCPC and a volunteer or terminate employment of a staff member at any time even if a DSS investigation fails to conclusively establish abuse.

B. DSS Investigation (Report of Abuse)

All GCPC members, volunteers and employees must comply with all state laws and shall not further investigate a reported incident of abuse in order to avoid compromising, interfering with or delaying

the civil investigation. If further witnesses or more information comes forward, the church has an obligation to document and communicate further reports to DSS.

6. The Senior Pastor or designee will immediately contact the church's attorney and liability insurance carrier.
7. When the Senior Pastor and/or any GCPC Pastor is/are alleged to have been a perpetrator, the Clerk of Session and/or Chair of the Personnel Council will replace either one in this Responding Section.
8. The Senior Pastor and/or Personnel Council will determine whether the staff member or volunteer will be allowed to return to work at GCPC.
9. Refer to the GCPC Personnel Policy for any general employment procedures.

SECTION SIX

SCREENING

A. Screening of Employees

1. Personal interviews, personal and professional references, employment records, and criminal and civil background checks will be required for all employees of GCPC. They will be obtained and reviewed by the Personnel Council and Senior Pastor.
2. Interviews, reference checks, employment records, and criminal and civil background checks on employees are to be documented in writing. These records are confidential church property.
3. All current and potential employees will be required to sign an Employee and Volunteer Agreement. This Agreement is a supplement to the personnel application, and is maintained in the employee's personnel file.
4. Any candidate for employment who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse/neglect/dependency cannot be employed by GCPC. Notwithstanding the above, a criminal conviction related to any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from employment with minors: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, child pornography, or abuse of a minor *at any time*, or a drug-related conviction within the past 3 years.

B. Screening of Volunteers

Background checks shall be done on all GCPC Child, Youth, Deacon and Elder volunteers at the direction of the Senior Pastor and/or the Director of Formation for Children, Youth, and Their Families and shall be renewed every three years. Information from volunteer application forms and background checks on volunteers will be reviewed by the supervising pastor or program staff member and will be held confidentially. As part of continued volunteering at GCPC, volunteers may be asked to verify whether they have been charged or convicted with any criminal or traffic offense since the date of their last background check conducted by GCPC.

C. Assessing the Responsibility Relationship of Volunteer and Employment Positions

All employees and volunteers whose work and activities might place them in the presence of minors and vulnerable adults shall aid GCPC in its assessment process as follows:

- Completing and signing a Volunteer Application Form for volunteers or a resume for employees.
- For volunteers: completing a personal interview with a pastoral or program staff person or program director designated by the staff person for volunteers. For Staff: completing an interview with the Personnel Council or appointed Interviewing Committee and provide professional references as deemed necessary by the Personnel Council. For Hourly Employees: an interview with the Director of Formation for Children, Youth, and Their Families , with the knowledge and approval of the Senior Pastor/Head of Staff.
- Successfully completing training and educational event arranged by the church as outlined in Section Six: Training.
- Agreeing to a National Criminal Records Check and any other background checks that are deemed necessary by the church.
- Providing a copy of a valid North Carolina driver's license and proof of insurance for any transporting of minors.
- National Criminal Records, any other background checks deemed by the church, valid North Carolina driver's license and proof of insurance will be re-checked every 2 years or more often as deemed necessary by the supervising staff member or Personnel Council.
- The Car Pool Permission Slip is required for any minor attending church activities (authorized by church personnel).

SECTION SEVEN

TRAINING

- A. All employees and volunteers who work directly and regularly with minors are required to attend a training session and to sign the required documents during their orientation period regarding the protection of minors. Additional training may also be periodically required. The church will offer periodic training and review opportunities. This training will include the following:
- Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
 - Definition and recognition of child abuse/neglect/dependency
 - Prevention of abuse
 - What constitutes inappropriate conduct
 - Church policies governing working with minors and vulnerable adults
 - Civil and criminal consequences of misconduct
 - Procedures for reporting observed or suspected misconduct
 - North Carolina statutes regarding Child Protective Services and mandatory reporting
 - Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct

The Director of Children’s and Family Ministries will be responsible for providing and scheduling this training.

During their orientation, each employee and volunteer will receive the brochure, “Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect,” which is printed by the North Carolina Division of Social Services.

B. Education and Training Objectives for the Staff and Volunteers

All employees and volunteers must complete an initial, in-person minor child, youth and vulnerable adult protection training. The training will:

- Address critical aspects of GCPC Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and ensure that all employees and volunteers understand and comply the policy.
- Take place at least twice a year; with attempts to ensure that scheduling of training is done at times that maximize participation.
- Training must be “renewed” online every 2 years. At the time of training, the appropriate documents will be renewed.

SECTION EIGHT

DRIVING

All church staff and volunteers transporting minors/vulnerable adults for church activities shall be in compliance with the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy. An adult driving minors in this capacity is not to be in a vehicle alone with one minor, **unless that minor is related by family to the adult or unless the parents give written permission for the adult to transport the minor. Written permission should be documented (e.g. a text or email from the parent).** If a situation develops in which one adult and only one minor are in a vehicle, the adult is to report the circumstances to the appropriate staff person and work with the staff to keep this from becoming a habitual practice, unless the parents have given written permission for the adult to transport the minor.

Regular Drivers

Those who frequently transport minors to off-site excursions for the church (typically church staff for children and youth ministries and youth advisors) shall be screened as described in section 6 and trained in the entire Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy as described in section 7. In addition, they are to read and sign the Safe Driver Form, as well as provide a copy of their driver’s license and proof of insurance. Regular drivers are only required to sign the Safe Driver Form once per year, unless a situation develops in which the claims on the form are no longer true.

Occasional Drivers

Volunteers who transport minors on an occasional basis do not require full screening and training, but are required to read and sign the Safe Driver Form, as well as provide a copy of their driver’s license and proof of insurance.

**INCIDENT REPORT FORM:
Report of Suspected Incident of
Abuse or Variance from
GCPC's Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy**

1. **Name of person(s) accused of abuse or variance from the policy:**

Name: _____

2. **Relationship of accused to child/children, youth or vulnerable adult** (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):

Relationship: _____

3. **Name (s) and age (s) of child/children, or youth or vulnerable adult affected by or involved with the abuse or variance:**

Name: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

(Attach additional names as needed)

4. **Date, location, and event** where initial observation or disclosure, and/or conversation with or report from **child/children, or youth or vulnerable adult or employee/volunteer occurred.**

Date: _____

Place: _____

Event: _____ (name church activity, function, program)

5. **Details of incident/variance** (it is recommended that you simply write exactly what you heard and/or saw and any actions you took):

6. **Reported to:**

Name(s)

Date/Time

*DSS and/or Law Enforcement Agency

Summary of Report:

Parent/Guardian
Summary of Report:

Associate Pastor
Summary of Report:

Director of Children's and Family Ministries
Summary of Report:

Senior Pastor/Head of Staff
Summary of Report:

Other Contacts
Summary of Report:

***A DSS report is not needed for a mere rules violation.**

7. **Name of employee or volunteer** observing abuse, receiving disclosure of abuse, and/or witnessing a repeated variance from GCPC's Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy:

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Reporter Signature

Date

Time

If applicable:

Additional Preparer of Report:

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Additional Reporter Signature

Date

Time

Additional information received after submission of the original incident report:

Christian Education Coordinator

Youth/Children's Choir Assistant

List any talents, training, education, etc. that would help enrich the lives of the children/youth of GCPC:

Are you 18 years or older? Yes ____ No ____

HAVE YOU AT ANY TIME EVER:

- Been arrested for any reason? YES NO
- Been convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, any crime? YES NO
- Engaged in or been accused of any pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, child pornography, abuse of a minor or drug use? YES NO

IF THE ANSWER TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS IS “YES,” PLEASE EXPLAIN IN DETAIL:

IS THERE ANY OTHER ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT THE CHURCH SHOULD BE AWARE OF?
IF SO, PLEASE EXPLAIN IN DETAIL:

Application Attachment--Office Use Only:

Application Received Date: _____

Application Reviewed Date: _____

Volunteer Screening Level: Basic Responsibility _____ High Responsibility: _____

Screening Requirements Completed:

Basic Responsibility:

Personal Interview Date: _____

High Responsibility:

Personal Interview Date: _____

National Criminal Records Check - Date Received: _____ (attach to application)

Copy of NC driver's license and proof of insurance
Date Received: _____ (attach to application)

Any other background checks deemed necessary by the church. Date: _____

Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Training Completed: _____

EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Volunteers (elected or appointed) and staff will indicate their acceptance of GCPC’s Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy by reading the document and signing the statement below:

I, _____ (*print name*), have read the GCPC Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and agree to abide by the policy and all its protocol. I also state that I have not been charged with or convicted of pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, child pornography, and/or abuse of a minor. I have not resigned from or been terminated from any position for reasons relating to pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, child pornography, and/or abuse of a minor. I also agree to be under a continuing obligation to disclose any future charges or conviction of pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, child pornography, and/or abuse of a minor. I have not used illegal drugs and/or been charged with or convicted of any drug-related crimes within the past 5 years. I agree to be under a continuing obligation to disclose any future use of illegal drugs and any charges or convictions for drug-related crimes.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____



GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check

BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION CONSENT

I, _____ (applicant complete name), hereby authorize Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, past employment, education, criminal, or police records, including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information contained on my Application and/or obtaining other information, which may be material to my qualifications as a volunteer or for employment now, and if applicable, during the tenure of my volunteering or employment with Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church.

I release Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church and/or its agents and any person or entity, which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims, or lawsuits in regards to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.

The following is my true and complete legal name, and all information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Full name (PRINTED)

Maiden name or other names used

Present street address how long?

City/State Zip

Former street address how long?

City/State Zip

Date of birth Driver's license # State of license SSN #

Signature Date

(Office use only) Need a DMV check also _____



GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Safe Driver Form

In the interest of safety for the children and youth of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church, our church staff and volunteers abide by the following principles regarding transporting minors.

Drivers are to transport children and youth using great care and safety.

Drivers are to follow all city and state laws regarding driving and transportation safety.

Drivers are to avoid being in a vehicle with only one minor, unless that minor is related by family to the driver or unless the parents have given written permission for the driver to transport the minor.

Drivers are to provide a copy of a valid driver's license and proof of auto insurance.

Drivers are to sign this Safe Driver Form.

I hereby certify that I do not have any outstanding charges of DUI or DWI, nor have I been convicted of any such charges over the last 10 years.

I hereby certify that I am presently not under the influence of alcohol, recreational drugs, or prescription drugs that could impair my ability to drive a vehicle.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____



GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Youth Ministry Transportation Permission Slip

_____ has my (our) permission to ride in a car with an adult advisor or parent to youth activities sponsored by Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church (USA). On behalf of myself and any other parent or guardian of the above named minor and for and in consideration of the mutual promises and agreements herein contained, I hereby release and discharge Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church (USA), its trustees, officers, employees, members, agents and representatives from any and all injuries, claims, damages, demands, suits, and causes of action, in law or equity, arising out of or by reason of any matter, cause or thing whatsoever, arising out such participation and or needed medical attention.

I further acknowledge that I have been informed that Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church (USA) does not provide any accident insurance for youth activities on church property or elsewhere.

This permission will remain in force from dates: _____.

(Parent/guardian signature)

(Date)

Contact information for parent/guardian:

Name:

Home phone:

Cell phone:

Other contact:

ATTACHMENT ONE
NORTH CAROLINA STATUTE REPORTS TO DSS

N.C.G. S. § 7B-301. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment

Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by GS 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be made orally, by telephone, or in writing. The report shall include information as is known to the person making it including the name and address of the juvenile; the name and address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or caretaker; the age of the juvenile; the names and ages of other juveniles in the home; the present whereabouts of the juvenile if not at the home address; the nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse, neglect, or dependency; and any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the need for protective services or court intervention. If the report is made orally or by telephone, the person making the report shall give the person's name, address, and telephone number. Refusal of the person making the report to give a name shall not preclude the department's assessment of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of maltreatment.

Upon receipt of any report of sexual abuse of the juvenile in a child care facility, the director shall notify the State Bureau of Investigation within 24 hours or on the next workday. If sexual abuse in a child care facility is not alleged in the initial report, but during the course of the assessment there is reason to suspect that sexual abuse has occurred, the director shall immediately notify the State Bureau of Investigation. Upon notification that sexual abuse may have occurred in a child care facility, the State Bureau of Investigation may form a task force to investigate the report.

N.C.G.S. § 7B-101. Definitions

As used in this Subchapter, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the following words have the listed meanings:

- (1) Abused juveniles. -- Any juvenile less than 18 years of age whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker:
 - a. Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the juvenile a serious physical injury by other than accidental means;
 - b. Creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of serious physical injury to the juvenile by other than accidental means;
 - c. Uses or allows to be used upon the juvenile cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures or cruel or grossly inappropriate devices to modify behavior;
 - d. Commits, permits, or encourages the commission of a violation of the following laws by, with, or upon the juvenile: first-degree rape, as provided in GS 14-27.2; second degree rape as provided in GS 14-27.3; first-degree sexual offense, as provided in GS 14-27.4; second degree sexual offense, as provided in GS 14-27.5; sexual act by a custodian, as provided in GS 14-27.7; crime against nature, as provided in GS 14-177; incest, as provided inGS 14-178; preparation of obscene photographs, slides, or motion pictures of the juvenile, as provided in GS 14-190.5; employing or permitting the juvenile to assist in a violation of the obscenity laws as provided in GS 14-190.6; dissemination of obscene material to the juvenile as provided in GS 14-190.7 and GS 14-190.8; displaying or disseminating material harmful to the juvenile as provided in GS 14-190.14 and GS 14-190.15; first and second degree sexual exploitation of the juvenile as provided in GS 14-190.16 and GS 14-190.17; promoting the prostitution of the juvenile as provided in GS 14-190.18; and taking indecent liberties with the juvenile, as provided in GS 14-202.1;

e. Creates or allows to be created serious emotional damage to the juvenile; serious emotional damage is evidenced by a juvenile's severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior toward himself or others; or

f. Encourages, directs, or approves of delinquent acts involving moral turpitude committed by the juvenile.

...

(9) Dependent juvenile. -- A juvenile in need of assistance or placement because the juvenile has no parent, guardian, or custodian responsible for the juvenile's care or supervision or whose parent, guardian, or custodian is unable to provide for the care or supervision and lacks an appropriate alternative child care arrangement.

...

(15) Neglected juvenile. -- A juvenile who does not receive proper care, supervision, or discipline from the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker; or who has been abandoned; or who is not provided necessary medical care; or who is not provided necessary remedial care; or who lives in an environment injurious to the juvenile's welfare; or who has been placed for care or adoption in violation of law. In determining whether a juvenile is a neglected juvenile, it is relevant whether that juvenile lives in a home where another juvenile has died as a result of suspected abuse or neglect or lives in a home where another juvenile has been subjected to abuse or neglect by an adult who regularly lives in the home.

ATTACHMENT TWO DEFINITIONS

Abuse: includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or neglect.

Employee: a person who is hired by another person or business for a wage or fixed payment in exchange for personal services and who does not provide the services as part of an independent business; any individual employed by an employer. For purposes of the church, employee includes both ordained and non-ordained people.

Employer: For purposes of this policy, GCPC, higher Presbyterian judicatories, or independent business people.

Volunteer: a person who, although not an "employee," participates in child and youth activities in such a manner so as to exercise supervision, care, custody, and/or control over a child or youth other than his/her own child. A parent attending a child and youth activity with his/her own child, but not exercising supervision, care, custody, and/or control over another child is not considered a "volunteer."

Child: A person 5th Grade or younger

Youth: A person in 6th grade through 12th grade

Vulnerable Adult: The words "vulnerable adult" shall mean any person 18 years of age or over or any lawfully emancipated minor who is present in the State of North Carolina and who is physically or mentally incapacitated due to an intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy or autism; organic brain damage caused by advanced age or other physical degeneration in connection

therewith; or due to conditions incurred at any age which are the result of accident, organic brain damage, mental or physical illness, or continued consumption or absorption of substances.¹

¹ This is the definition used in the adult protective services definition as codified in the NC General Statutes:
https://ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_108A/GS_108A-101.pdf