

## **Statement of Mission**

It is part of our faith covenant and our response to God's great love and grace that each of God's children is nurtured in faith and love within our church family. Under the weight of these responsibilities to God, our goal is to provide a safe, caring place for children within our church, and to provide a safe, caring environment for staff and volunteers to carry out their ministry to our children. To this end we, the Session of Washington Presbyterian Church, do put forth the following policies:

## **Helpful Definitions**

### **What is a child?**

A child is a person age birth to 17 years old.

### **What is abuse?**

Abuse is an act of commission and generally involves non-accidental physical injury, sexual activity or advances, or verbal battering, which creates substantial emotional harm.

### **What is Neglect?**

Neglect is an act of commission or omission and generally involves lack of such necessities as food, shelter, medical care or supervision appropriate for the child's age or developmental level. Neglect can include being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while leading or participating in a children's function.

### **What is Mandated Reporting?**

Illinois State Law requires certain persons, due to their training or work role, to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Child and Family Services.

### **Who is a Volunteer?**

A volunteer is someone who works with the children of Washington Presbyterian Church but who is not paid for that work. They may or may not be ordained.

### **Who is a Non-ordained Staff Member?**

A non-ordained staff member is someone who is paid by Washington Presbyterian Church but is not ordained. This includes office, custodial, music staff and nursery attendant.

### **Who is an Ordained Staff Member?**

An ordained staff member is a pastor or associate pastor who is paid by Washington Presbyterian Church.

## **Policies for the Prevention of Abuse**

### **Background Checks**

All paid staff (newly hired after adoption of the CPP) who encounter children in their work at Washington Presbyterian Church will undergo a background check which will be paid for by Washington Presbyterian Church. Eligible staff will be required to share private information necessary for performing these checks. All results are confidential and will be kept under lock and key by the Pastor and Personnel Committee. Until the background check is complete, individuals may interact with children with the supervision of another adult. Upon receipt of the completed background check, individuals will be advised as to the outcome.

### **Known Volunteers**

All individuals who volunteer in the Sunday school program, Junior and Senior High programs, Vacation Bible School, and any other church-related program must be a member of Washington Presbyterian Church or known to the congregation.

### **Two Adult Rule**

Washington Presbyterian Church will make a concerted effort to provide two non-related adults (age 18 or older) for all church sponsored activities involving children. The only exception to this two adult policy will be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the area (as with the nursery). Adults will remain with children until they are picked up by a parent/guardian.

### **Open Door Policy**

Any classroom with only one adult present shall have a window in the door or the door left ajar at all times. In the event of a one-on-one conversation, the door must have a window or be left open.

### **Leaving Church Grounds**

No volunteer or staff member may take a child off of church property without the permission of a parent or guardian. All persons driving children must be age 18 or older, have a valid driver's license and vehicle insurance. The use of seatbelts in cars will be required at all times and all local and state traffic laws must be observed. Written permission shall be obtained for any field trip involving children, including meeting one-on-one with mentors.

### **Mentoring Policy**

Parental permission slips must be signed in order for mentors to meet one-on-one with children. Mentors must coordinate each meeting with parent/guardian.

### **Overnight Policy**

For overnight gatherings there will be at least one male and one female adult chaperone present and follow the ratio of at least 1 chaperone to every 10 children. Written parental permission must be obtained to participate.

### **Taking Attendance Policy**

Taking of attendance is required at all youth events so that everyone can be accounted for in an emergency.

### **Phone Access Policy**

Access to phones, cell phones or walkie-talkies is mandated for all youth events.

### **Publishing Policy**

Permission is to be obtained for any child appearing in published photographs, videos, voice recordings or other likeness. Children's names will not be published on any church web site.

**Discipline Policy**

Volunteers and staff will use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement. Volunteers and staff will respond to children with respect and consideration. A child cannot be disciplined in any way that deprives them of their basic rights to be safe and comfortable.

**Alcohol and Tobacco Policy**

Using, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited when working with children at church related activities. The use of tobacco or tobacco-related products is also prohibited.

**Promoting Policy Awareness**

All volunteers and staff who work with children, including those who transport children, at Washington Presbyterian Church will be made aware of the above policies. Each will receive a copy of this document and will be required to sign a copy once they have read it and agreed to its conditions. All members of the Session of Washington Presbyterian Church will also receive a copy of this policy.

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*I have read the above policies and understand their meaning. I agree to adhere to them when involved in activities by Washington Presbyterian Church.*

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Name

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Date

## **Abuse Reporting Procedures**

1. It is essential that all who work with children understand the guidelines for behavior, the signs of possible abuse, and what to do if abuse is suspected. CE will arrange for a training session on recognizing and reporting incidents of child abuse. The training will be open to all members of Washington Presbyterian Church and is required for all church personnel who have contact with children, Elders, Deacons and all members of the CE committee. The CE committee shall record and report to the Pastor and Personnel Committee all persons who have attended the training session.
2. The Pastor or Clerk of Session shall have a written log of any allegations, the steps taken by the church in response and the final resolution to the matter. All conversations with the staff/volunteer must be documented for future reference.
3. The pastor will notify the church's attorney and insurance company that a complaint has been made. Under no circumstance should any representative of the church (employees, volunteers, or Session members) contact the child or the parents involved in an alleged child abuse incident except those designated by Session (working in concert with counsel).
4. The church's attorney shall be consulted at each step of the reporting and investigatory process
5. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance regarding any allegation of child abuse and all records involving any allegation must be kept under lock and key in the Pastor's office. Note: Under the confidentiality code, even parents are not informed of such allegations.

## **Plan for Response to Allegations**

1. Do not prejudge, but all allegations need to be taken seriously.
2. Situations must be handled forthrightly yet with respect for the privacy of those involved.
3. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of the church's attorney.
4. The church's insurance provider must be contacted immediately.
5. Adequate care must be shown for the wellbeing of all persons involved.
6. The victim shall not be held responsible in any way.
7. Treat the accused with dignity and support.

## **Steps to Insure Proper Response**

1. Maintain current and complete records of staff applications, reference and screening forms. These should remain under lock and key in the Pastor's office.
2. Know the State of Illinois' reporting requirements.
3. Provide staff/volunteers with training and reporting procedures.
4. Prepare in advance a clear, brief position statement of the church regarding child abuse. Example: *The Congregation of Washington Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, members, staff and volunteers participating in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. An allegation has been made and we are working with authorities to ensure the matter is investigated fully.*

## **What To Do If You Suspect a *VOLUNTEER* Is Abusing or Neglecting a Child**

### **Who do you contact?**

If you suspect a church volunteer of abuse or neglect, immediately contact the pastor (Jennifer Sakata, 309-444-3637), or Clerk of Session (Teri White, 309-444-4245), and notify the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). If needed, the pastor will help you in this notification. DCFS will then work with you as they investigate the matter further. This very well might involve formulating an official written accusation.

### **What happens to the volunteer?**

Once an accusation is made, the church volunteer will be removed from his/her interaction with children until said accusation has been thoroughly investigated. If the accusation proves to be unfounded, the church worker may return to his/her work with children. If the accusation proves to be founded in any way, the church worker will be permanently removed from his/her work with children.

### **When will the Session know?**

If DCFS deems the accusation is founded in any way, the pastor will inform the Session of the accusation and follow-up investigation at its next meeting.

## **What To Do If You Suspect a NON-ORDAINED STAFF MEMBER Is Abusing or Neglecting a Child**

### **Who do you contact?**

If you suspect a non-ordained staff member of abuse or neglect, immediately contact the pastor (Jennifer Sakata, 309-444-3637) or Clerk of Session (Teri White 309-444-4245) and notify the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). If needed, the pastor will help you in this notification. DCFS will then work with you as they investigate the matter further. This very well might involve formulating an official written accusation.

### **What happens to the non-ordained staff member?**

Once an accusation is made, the non-ordained staff member will be removed from his/her duties and placed on paid leave until said accusation has been thoroughly investigated. If the accusation proves to be unfounded, the non-ordained staff member may return to his/her work including work with children. If the accusation proves to be founded in any way, the Personnel Committee will dissolve the relationship between the non-ordained staff member and Washington Presbyterian Church.

### **When will the Session know?**

If a non-ordained staff member is accused of abuse and/or neglect, a pastor will immediately notify the Personnel Committee. If said accusation proves to be founded in any way, the Personnel Committee will notify the Session. If said accusation proves to be unfounded, the Personnel Committee does not need to notify the Session.

## **What To Do if You Suspect an ORDAINED STAFF MEMBER is Abusing or Neglecting a Child**

### **Who do you contact?**

If you suspect an ordained staff member of abuse or neglect, immediately contact the executive presbyter of Great Rivers Presbytery (Sue Krummel 1-800-537-8592) and notify the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). For suspected ordained staff members there are two parallel investigations that will take place: civil and church. DCFS, the civil authorities, and an investigating committee of the Presbytery, the church authorities, will both work with you as they investigate the matter further. These are separate investigations but both will involve formulating an official written accusation. Charges can be filed by both civil and church authorities and, even if civil charges are dropped, church charges may stand and vice versa.

### **What happens to the ordained staff member?**

Once an accusation is made, the ordained staff member will be removed from his/her duties and placed on paid leave until said accusation has been thoroughly investigated. If the accusation proves to be unfounded, the ordained staff member may return to his/her work, including work with children. If the accusation proves to be founded in any way, the Session will dissolve the relationship between the ordained staff member and Washington Presbyterian Church. This will be facilitated by representatives of Great Rivers Presbytery.

### **When will the Session know?**

If an ordained staff member is accused of child abuse and/or neglect, the executive presbyter will immediately contact the Session and inform them of the accusation.

## **What If An ELDER, DEACON OR PASTOR Suspects abuse or Neglect of a Child**

### **Must you report your suspicions?**

Under our church's *Book of Order* (church law) sections G-6.00204 (pastors), G-6.0304 (elders), and G-6.0402 (deacons), respectively **mandate** that these three ordained groups within the church report any suspicions of abuse or neglect. The exact language is as follows:

*A {minister of the Word and Sacrament/elder/deacon} shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge, gained in the course of service to the church, of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of privileged communication; or (2) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.*

While church law mandates elders, deacons, and pastors to report suspicions, civil law only mandates pastors. An elder or deacon may, however, be mandated due to their profession.

### **Who do you contact?**

If you suspect a church volunteer of abuse or neglect, immediately contact the pastor (Jennifer Sakata, 300-444-3637) or Clerk of Session (Teri White, 309-444-4245) and notify the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). If needed, the pastor will help you in this notification. DCFS will then work with you as they investigate the matter further. This very well might involve formulating an official written accusation.

## **Who is a Mandated Reporter?**

### **Pastors**

Pastors are required by law, both civil and church, to report any suspicions they have about child abuse or neglect.

### **Elders and Deacons**

Elders and deacons are not required by *civil* law to report any suspicions they have about child abuse or neglect. They are, however, required to report under *church* law (see previous page).

### **Church Members**

Church members are not required to report any suspicions they have about child abuse or neglect simply by being church members. Some members are required by law to report due to their occupations (doctors, teachers, etc.)