

## **New Child Protection Policy**

For all of its 72 years, Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) has welcomed children, youth, and families and sought to provide a safe and secure environment for those participating in our programs and activities. In order for us to continue in our ministry to children and families, it is necessary for us to implement specific practices in the form of a Child Protection Policy. The intent is to safeguard the children and youth of Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our volunteer and paid childcare providers from false accusations. The new policy includes:

- Six-month rule: Volunteers with children and/or youth must be a church member or regular attendee for at least six (6) months.
- Background Screening: All volunteers ages 18 and over desiring to work with children/youth and employees of the church will submit to a Criminal Background Check.
- Child Safety Training: Volunteers will complete a short, online, interactive training course covering areas such as: definitions of child sexual abuse, effects, recognizing behaviors, and prevention.

## **Frequently Asked Questions...**

### **• Our church never needed this policy before. Why do we need it now?**

Because sexual abuse of children is an enormous problem even in church. Consequently, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) now requires that all church councils (Sessions) adopt and implement a child protection policy (G-3.0106; 2015-2017 Book of Order). PC(USA) Stated Clerk, Gradye Parsons, says this requirement shows that protecting children is a priority for the denomination: "We want every family that brings children to church to be assured that their children are safe."

### **How was our church's policy created?**

In response to the requirement from the PC(USA), the Session appointed the following members to a policy team in August of 2015: Alice Gill (Leader), Denise Angevine, Marge Jennings, and Rev. Jonathan Watson. After several months of research and reviewing policies from other churches along with resources from the Presbytery and PC(USA), the team presented a draft policy to the Session at its February 2016 meeting. After much prayer, discussion and review, the policy was approved by Session on March 20, 2016.

### **Where can I view a copy of the policy?**

There are printed copies available in the Church Office and on our website:

[www.capefearpres.org](http://www.capefearpres.org).

**Does this policy prohibit me from being able to hug or be affectionate toward my family's children or my friend's children during a worship service or other all-church activities?**

This is a reasonable, sensible policy. Nobody is ever prevented from demonstrating affection toward their own children and relatives. When it comes to touching other people's children, there are common-sense guidelines that all adults should follow, and those who work with children are particularly responsible for knowing what those guidelines are. You will learn about this during your training.

**Who is conducting the background screenings?**

We've contracted with Protect My Ministry ([protectmyministry.com](http://protectmyministry.com)). Protect My Ministry (PMM) is a Christian-owned and operated business. They work with thousands of ministries across the country including several churches in our area. Preventing sexual predators and violent offenders from working with children and youth is their primary concern.

**What does the Background Screening contain?**

- Social Security Verification and Address History
- National Criminal Database Search
- National Sex Offender Search
- Alias Names

**Will the background screening affect my credit report?**

No. These checks do not bring up credit information because a credit report is not necessary for the type of background screening we are conducting.

**Who will have to undergo a background screening?**

All current and future Staff, Children/Youth Sunday School Teachers, Youth Leaders, and VBS Volunteers.

**Who will have access to the information received through the background screening?**

Only Alice Gill (Sunday School Superintendent) and Pastor Jonathan will review the confidential information received in the background check to make sure the individual is able to work with children. The background reports will be maintained securely on the PMM website and will be neither downloaded nor kept in the church office.

**Will I have to pay for this screening?**

No. The church is covering the cost of screening for all volunteers

**What if I want to volunteer with children/youth but do not have a computer?**

We will make the church office computer available to anyone who needs it for the purposes of background screening and online child safety training. Just let Alice Gill know.

We thank you for your cooperation and patience as we implement this new Child Protection Policy. Any further questions should be directed to the members of the Policy Team: Alice Gill, Denise Angevine, Marge Jennings, or Jonathan Watson.