

PRINCE OF PEACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
6299 Token Forest Dr
Manassas, VA 20112

June 20, 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“It could never happen here,” is a common response to reports of child abuse in the home, workplace or faith community. In an effort to protect our children/youth and those who work with them at Prince of Peace United Methodist Church, the SPRC continues to implement a Safe Sanctuary Program including Child/Youth Protection Policy and Procedures.

The policy, with your support, creates the safest environment we can reasonably provide in which our children can grow in Christian love. It protects not only the children and youth involved in church-sponsored programs, but also their teachers/leaders, and the church organization itself. The policy is based on recommendations from insurance companies that specialize in church law, and recommendations from other churches that have implemented similar plans. The policy is available for your review in the Administrative Office.

To avoid discrimination and in compliance with conference guidelines and insurance company requirements, all employees and volunteers who work with children and youth, no matter how well-trusted or long-tenured, are subject to this policy. The policy is intended to discourage any would-be molester from gaining quick access to our children and enforce rules for a safe, smart and conscientious church.

By signing the covenant statement, you agree to the possibility of a background check as deemed necessary by the SPRC or Admin Concil.

This policy and associated procedures are not meant to burden or offend anyone supporting our children or youth. The Safe Sanctuary Policy is a protection policy for everyone and serves to enhance the safety of the church itself. Many thanks for your understanding and commitment to our children and youth ministries.

Grace and Peace,

SPRC

Prince of Peace United Methodist Church United Methodist Church Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Version 1.1, June, 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

“IT COULD NEVER HAPPEN HERE,” IS A COMMON RESPONSE TO REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE IN THE HOME, WORKPLACE OR FAITH COMMUNITY. IN AN EFFORT TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN/YOUTH AND THOSE WHO WORK WITH THEM AT PRINCE OF PEACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, THE SPRC CONTINUES TO IMPLEMENT A SAFE SANCTUARY PROGRAM INCLUDING CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES..... I

INTRODUCTION..... III

II. PURPOSE..... III

III. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION III

IV. VIRGINIA’S CHILD ABUSE LAW IV

V. TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE..... V

C. Sexual Abuse. Sexual abuse includes any act defined in the code of Virginia that is committed, or allowed to be committed, upon a child by a parent, caregiver, other child or youth, or person in a position of trust. Examples of such abuse are sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy, and other sexual abuse. v

D. Medical Neglect. Refusal or failure by caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental, or dental care for a condition, which if untreated could result in illness or developmental delays..... v

E. Failure to Thrive. A syndrome of infancy or early childhood that is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors. v

F. Mental Abuse/Neglect. Mental abuse or neglect is a pattern of acts or omissions by a parent, caregiver, other child or youth, or person in a position of trust that result in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development. v

G. Educational Neglect. The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program or study. vi

H. Bizarre Discipline. Bizarre discipline is any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational, or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior. vi

VI. REDUCING CHILD ABUSE..... VI

B. TWO ADULT RULE..... VII

C. CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE VIII

D. CHILDREN/YOUTH DISCIPLINE VIII

VII. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE VIII

VIII. POLICY REVIEW IX

INTRODUCTION

Prince of Peace United Methodist Church’s (POPUMC) intent is to provide a place to nurture the spiritual growth of people of all ages, which includes a caring and secure environment for children and youth in all phases of church life.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the policy and the associated procedures is to help:

- Ensure a caring and secure environment for children and youth in all phases of church life
- Protect employees and volunteers
- Reduce POPUMC's legal risk and liability exposure

Virginia Conference Child/Youth Protection Guidelines and the Safe Sanctuary Training Program were considered in the development (content and organization) of this policy. A copy of this policy is available in the Administrative Office for review at any time.

III. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

POPUMC seeks to express God's love of children and provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to prevent child abuse of any form to our children and youth and to be in ministry to families where abuse may occur. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures, and ministries must stand. Mark 10:13-16 is clear in defining our relationship with all children

And they were bringing children to him, that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And He took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them

Jesus teaches us explicitly that children have the right and the keys to the Kingdom of God. He demonstrated this through blessing and touch. Our goal in response to this Biblical mandate is to maintain a safe, secure, and loving place where children may grow - a place where caregivers, teachers, and leaders (both employees and volunteers) minister appropriately to their needs.

IV. VIRGINIA'S CHILD ABUSE LAW

Under Virginia law, Section 63.2-100, an abused child is defined as one who is less than 18 years of age, whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care (or other child or youth, or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis)), creates or inflicts, or threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon such a child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death or disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions. This includes the failure to provide care necessary for health, abandonment, committing or allowing sexual exploitation, endangering, or neglecting a child. Child abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional or mental, and may be the result of actions or omissions to act (e.g., lack of care for a child).

Section 63.2-1509, Virginia Revised Code, states that "Any person licensed to practice medicine or any of the healing arts, any hospital resident or intern, any person employed in the nursing profession, any persons employed as a social worker, any probation officer, any teacher or other person employed in a public or private school, kindergarten, or nursery school, any person providing full-time or part-time child care for pay on a regular planned basis, ...and any person associated with or employed by any private organization responsible for the care, custody or control of children who has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected child, shall report the matter immediately to the local department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred, or to the Department of Social Services' toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline." (Emphasis added).

To comply with these requirements, detailed reporting procedures with telephone numbers are provided in Paragraph VII.

In addition, everyone should report any known or suspected child abuse immediately. Any report is confidential and the person making the report is immune from liability for making such a report, unless it is proven that such a person acted in bad faith or with malicious intent.

V. TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE

The following definitions and explanations in this section are from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

A. Physical Abuse. Physical abuse is a physical injury, threat of injury, or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation; bone fracture; brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma; burns, scalding; cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions; internal injuries, poisoning; sprains, dislocations; gunshot, stabbing wounds.

B. Physical Neglect. Physical neglect is the failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food, and malnutrition.

C. Sexual Abuse. Sexual abuse includes any act defined in the code of Virginia that is committed, or allowed to be committed, upon a child by a parent, caregiver, other child or youth, or person in a position of trust. Examples of such abuse are sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy, and other sexual abuse.

D. Medical Neglect. Refusal or failure by caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental, or dental care for a condition, which if untreated could result in illness or developmental delays.

E. Failure to Thrive. A syndrome of infancy or early childhood that is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.

F. Mental Abuse/Neglect. Mental abuse or neglect is a pattern of acts or omissions by a parent, caregiver, other child or youth, or person in a position of trust that result in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.

G. Educational Neglect. The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program or study.

H. Bizarre Discipline. Bizarre discipline is any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational, or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior.

VI. REDUCING CHILD ABUSE

In an effort to create the safest possible environment, several child protection measures will be used. These measures include screening of employees, pastor(s) (unless documented screening by the Conference within the last twenty four months) and unpaid (volunteer) workers for a past child abuse conviction or impingement. In addition, there should always be two adults present in any situation where children are present. Employees and volunteers should read and understand the standards for appropriate classroom discipline.

For clarity, the following definitions should be used when reading this policy.

- Employee - any person who is hired and paid compensation for services rendered to POPUMC.
- Volunteer - Any person who donates/provides their time and talents in support of children or youth activities and is not paid.

A. Staff Qualification and Screening

Employees. Before beginning service, each employee will be asked to read the policy and fill out and sign the Covenant Statement (Attachment 1) indicating he/she has never been convicted of child abuse nor had such a conviction expunged. A ScreeningONE Criminal History Background Check (Attachment 2), will be completed for applicants for paid staff positions who are 18 years or older. The church will pay the cost of the check. An applicant cannot be hired until this check is completed and found to be satisfactory.

Volunteer. These positions are defined as longer than 30 days. Before beginning service, every employee and volunteer will be asked to read the policy and fill out and sign the Covenant Statement (Attachment 1) indicating he/she has never been convicted of child abuse nor had such a conviction expunged. The screening form requires the following: identification, general information, criminal convictions, prior church membership, and prior church volunteer work. Anyone who has had a child abuse conviction or expungement or anyone refusing to sign the statement, will not be permitted to work with children. A

ScreeningOne Criminal History Background Check (Attachment 2), may be completed for applicants for volunteers who are 18 years or older.

Community Groups. Registered leaders of community groups involving activities for children or youth; e.g., Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts, who use the church facilities, will be required to read the policy and fill out and sign the Covenant Statement (Attachment 3). **Church facilities will not be available to groups whose leaders refuse to read and sign the policy.**

Information Security/Confidentiality

- For employees, all signed applications and reference forms will be kept in a secured location. The information will be available to the pastor(s), the SPRC Chairperson, and the Screening Coordinator.
- ScreeningOne Criminal History Background Check information will be available **ONLY TO THE PASTOR(S)**. State Police checks will be mailed only to the pastor(s) and kept by the pastor(s) in a separate locked file.
- The pastor(s) does(do) not require further screening if the SPRC Chairperson receives documentation showing the screening has been accomplished by the Conference within the past 24 months.
- All signed Covenant Statements will be kept by the SPRC or Admin Council.

B. Two Adult Rule

Team teaching is required. Teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more per Sunday School hour or Worship Discovery to every class of children or youth. Concerted effort will be made to recruit sufficient numbers of volunteer teachers to permit such team teaching. Youth, sixteen and older, may act as a helper in Sunday School or Worship Discovery, with their parent's or guardian's permission. Observations of childcare rooms and classrooms of children or youth will be conducted by the Director of Children's Ministries, the Sunday School Superintendent, or their appointed representatives during Sunday School hours.

Classrooms or childcare rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers.

If a POPUMC youth group stays overnight at the church or overnight at a church sponsored off-site event, adult leaders must be present and must include at least two males for an all male group and two females for an all female group. If the group is of mixed gender, then two male and two female leaders are required. If these requirements cannot be met, the

activity must be canceled. If the POPUMC activity is not an overnight activity, the requirement is for two adult leaders.

Adult drivers for child/youth activities will always take at least two or more children/youth in their car. There should never be only one child/youth in a car with a driver of the opposite sex, unless there are two adults, one of which is the same sex as the youth/child.

Church-sponsored or community groups of children or youth; e.g., Cub Scouts, who meet at the church should have two or more adult leaders present whenever possible. When the group includes both boys and girls, both male and female leaders should be present.

C. Classroom Discipline

All teachers and workers will use the following discipline measures. If a child/youth is behaving inappropriately, the teacher or worker will tell the child/youth specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is. If this measure is not effective, the child/youth will be returned to the parents.

NO physical punishment or verbal abuse; e.g., ridicule, is to be used at any time. If removal of the child/youth from the room becomes necessary, the child must be returned to the parent or guardian and the situation will be discussed with the child's parents or guardian as soon as possible.

D. Children/Youth Discipline

All leaders will use the following discipline measures. If a child/youth is behaving inappropriately, leader will tell the child/youth specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is. If inappropriate behavior continues, the leader will contact the parent(s) to come pick up their child/youth. It will be up to the leader, pastor, and parent to determine when/if the child/youth will be allowed to continue to participate.

NO physical punishment or verbal abuse; e.g., ridicule, is to be used at any time.

VII.REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Should there be allegations of child abuse occurring at or observed at POPUMC, these reporting procedures shall be followed:

Notify the Pastor(s) or Lay Leader(s) immediately.

Treat any allegation of child abuse seriously and pray for the church and all persons affected by the allegation throughout the process. It is appropriate to show care and concern for the alleged victim. This is the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received or otherwise made known. Observe confidentiality for the alleged victim, the accused, and the accuser.

The person notified shall perform the following:

A. Notify the Alleged Victim's Parents or Guardian

B. REQUIRED BY LAW: Notify the Prince William County or Virginia Department of Social Services.

- Prince William County Dept. of Social Services 703-792-4200
- Prince William County Police 703-792-6500 (non-emergency)
- Virginia: 1-800-552-7096 (Child Abuse Hotline)

C. Document the Allegation

- **DO** record all phone calls on a report sheet, which includes the name of the person called, date and time of the call, and a summary of the conversation. Include any direction given by the District, Prince William County, or the Virginia Department of Social Services.
- **DO NOT** confront the accused with the allegation unless and until advised by the United Methodist Church Conference Response Team to do so. If the accused has assigned duties within the life of the church, that person must be immediately relieved of their duties until the investigation is concluded.
- **DO NOT** investigate the allegation. The pastor should extend whatever care and resources necessary, but under **no** circumstances should the pastor or any church leader or members investigate the allegation. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the pastor or church leader should under **no** circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation that could contaminate the investigation.
- **DO NOT** assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or refuting the allegation.

D. Notify the District Superintendent

Inform the Alexandria District Superintendent of the allegations: District Office: **703-820-7200**

If a pastor is accused of Child Abuse, the Virginia Annual Conference Policy on Sexual Misconduct states that the District Superintendent will contact the Conference Response Team. The Response Team will send a representative to POPUMC within 24 hours to conduct an investigation.

E. Notify the POPUMC Insurance Company. R. H. Nicholson and Company at 703-261-6106

VIII. POLICY REVIEW

The Child Protection Policy and Procedures of POPUMC shall be reviewed and approved annually by the SPRC .

Employee/Volunteer Covenant Statement

The information on this form is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I hereby certify I have read the child protection policy of Prince of Peace United Methodist Church United Methodist Church, I understand that policy, and I agree to abide by all of the provisions of that policy.

I further state I do not have any unresolved issues relating to child abuse or child sexual abuse that would pose a risk or hinder my effectiveness in working with children or youth.

I further state I have never committed any crime involving abuse of a child or youth.

(If applicable, I further authorize any references or churches listed in this application to provide any information (including opinions) regarding my character and fitness to work with children or youth.

I further understand as an employee or volunteer, POPUMC can at any time initiate a Virginia State Police Criminal History Background Check.

I give my consent for Prince of Peace United Methodist Church to conduct a ScreeningOne Criminal History Background Check

I further state I have carefully read this statement, know the contents thereof, and I sign this statement as my own free act.

Employee/Volunteer _____

Parent/Guardian _____

(If applicant is a minor)

Date _____