

1 **Myers Park Presbyterian Church**
2 **CHILD AND YOUTH**
3 **PROTECTION POLICY**

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5 *Revised by Session December 5, 2022*
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41 **CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

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43 **I. PURPOSE, APPLICABILITY, SCOPE AND POLICY TERMS Purpose**

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45 This policy is intended:

- 46 • To be faithful to our baptismal vows as we seek to welcome children and remove stumbling
- 47 blocks.
- 48 • To provide a safe and secure environment for children and youth at MPPC.
- 49 • To protect children and youth from sexual, physical, and emotional abuse while participating in
- 50 MPPC activities.
- 51 • To provide a mechanism to deal with reported concerns and subsequent actions.
- 52 • To guide MPPC as an institution in the conduct of its employees and volunteers and prevent
- 53 incidents and allegations of child abuse.
- 54 • To protect adult volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

55
56 This policy addresses five components of child and youth protection:

- 57 1. Screening applicants for employment and volunteer service for a history of behavior
- 58 potentially detrimental to children and youth.
- 59 2. Training both employees and volunteers and children and youth in the child and youth
- 60 protection policy and in appropriate supervision and chaperoning.
- 61 3. Reporting allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protection issues
- 62 4. Responding to allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protection issues.
- 63 5. Addressing known offenders as members of MPPC

64
65 **Applicability**

66 This policy applies to persons including MPPC employees and volunteers participating in all children and

67 youth programs of MPPC, including but not limited to:

- 68 ○ Sunday school classes
- 69 ○ Children and youth fellowship programs
- 70 ○ Weekday School
- 71 ○ Children and youth choirs
- 72 ○ Church sponsored retreats, mission trips, etc.
- 73 ○ Vacation Church Camp
- 74 ○ Wellness Ministry and its sponsored activities.
- 75 ○ Church sponsored athletic teams
- 76 ○ Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts
- 77 ○ Outreach, such as CROSS, community service, etc.
- 78 ○ Nurseries and childcare

79
80 **Scope**

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82 **Who is Covered by this Policy?**

83 This policy supersedes all prior MPPC child and youth protection policy statements.

84
85 All employees of Myers Park Presbyterian Church, including the staff of the Weekday School, are governed
86 by this policy, which relates specifically to the Personnel Manual’s reference to “Child Protection Policy.”
87 With regard to any employee(s) of MPPC, perceived conflicts or ambiguities in interpretation and application
88 of this policy shall be resolved by the Executive Director and Head of Staff.

89
90 Generally, MPPC does not directly control independent contractors, however, all independent contractors who
91 work with MPPC children and youth are governed by this policy.

92
93 All volunteer leaders of Myers Park Presbyterian Church who work with children and youth are governed by this
94 policy.

97
98 **What Does the Policy Require?**
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- 100 1. All employees and volunteers shall abide by the Code of Conduct.
101
102 2. Each person must assume responsibility for his/her own actions in working with children and youth and
103 for attending training offered on child and youth protection.
104
105 3. Each person must be screened by application and background check.
106
107 4. An individual may be terminated from employment and/or volunteer service for failure to observe and
108 abide by this policy. This action may be taken regardless of the outcome of any investigation if the
109 Head of Staff, Executive Director, Personnel Committee, or CYP Steering Committee determine that
110 the Child and Youth Protection Policy and procedures have not been followed.
111

112 **Outside Groups Using MPPC Facilities**

113 All leaders of non-MPPC sponsored groups and events using MPPC facilities, which have direct supervision
114 of children and youth, are expected to adhere to these policies. Upon receipt of the policy from MPPC, the
115 leaders must review the Child and Youth Protection Policy and sign the Outside Group Leaders Release Form
116 to acknowledge their review of it and to confirm their agreement to follow the policy. This includes but is not
117 limited to groups such as: AA, ALANON, NA, CODA, UNCC Reading Enrichment Programs, Birthday
118 Parties scheduled through Wellness, etc.
119

120 Given the nature of the outside groups that use MPPC facilities, MPPC will not perform background checks,
121 seek personal and professional references, review employment records, or obtain civil and criminal records
122 for such groups. Leaders of outside groups will be invited to attend MPPC's frequently scheduled training
123 classes and are expected to conduct their own due diligence in this regard.
124

125 **Policy Terms (glossary):**
126

127 **Adult Leadership Form** – This form tracks compliance of adult leadership for ministries that supervise
128 children and/or youth.
129

130 **Child Abuse** – A non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child. Child abuse may include:

131 **Emotional Abuse** – Chronic and persistent acts by an adult that endanger the mental health or
132 emotional development of a child including rejection, ignoring, terrorizing, corrupting, constant
133 criticism, mean remarks, insults and giving little or no love, guidance and support.
134

135 **Neglect** – Occurs when the adults responsible for the well-being of a child fail to provide for the child.
136 Neglect may include not giving food, clothing, shelter; failure to keep children clean; lack of
137 supervision and withholding medical care.
138

139 **Physical Abuse** – An injury or pattern of injuries that happen to a child that are not accidental. These
140 injuries may include beatings, burns, bruises, bites, welts, strangulation, broken bones or death.
141

142 **Sexual Abuse** – Sexual abuse is the sexual assault or exploitation of children. Sexual abuse may consist
143 of numerous acts over a long period of time or a single incident. Children can be victimized from
144 infancy through adolescence. Typically, the perpetrator keeps the child from disclosing the abuse
145 through intimidation, threats, and rewards.
146

147 **Spiritual Abuse** – Using religious references to shame or by guilt to motivate a child into a
148 particular action or behavior.
149

150 **Child or Youth** – Persons under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law. This term shall
151 also include legally incompetent persons. A Child is 5th grade and younger. Youth are 6th grade-18
152 years old.

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Child and Youth Protection Steering Committee (The Steering Committee) – A three- five person team which meets to oversee the policy’s implementation, to monitor compliance, to recommend policy changes and clarifications, to provide frontline evaluation of concerns, making recommendations to the appropriate decision-making persons/entities, and to provide routine interpretation and training. Members include the Executive Pastor, the Operations Director, Associate Pastors for Children and Youth, and one layperson.

Church Sponsored Activity – Includes any and all gatherings that arise from MPPC- generated worship, educational, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission or recreational events. These events include on-campus and off-campus gatherings.

Employee – Any person who works for salary or wages at Myers Park Presbyterian Church (MPPC) (e.g. staff, MPPC Weekday School employees, custodians.) Employees may be 16 years of age if the second adult is 21 years of age or older.

Head of Staff – the Senior Pastor of Myers Park Presbyterian Church.

LGBTQIA+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexuality, and “+” other identities not represented.

Volunteer Leader – An adult member designated by the sponsoring organization, with responsibility for children and/or youth. The adult must be a minimum of 18 years of age and at least 4 years older than the oldest child or youth they supervise. Volunteer Leaders of overnight trips must be at least 22 years of age, with at least half the leaders 25 years of age or older.

II. SCREENING OF EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

1. Personal interviews, application forms, personal and professional references, employment records, background checks (both criminal and civil) are required for all employees. Background checks will be done on MPPC volunteer leaders and employees. Information gained by these means will be used to determine eligibility to work with children and youth.
2. Interviews, reference checks, employment records, and criminal and civil background checks are to be documented in writing, and become confidential church property. These records will not be released to any party except with the written approval of the Head of Staff or Executive Director. These records will be made available to the employee or volunteer leader, but not a candidate for employment, if a written request is made to the Head of Staff or Executive Director.
3. In addition, all current and potential employees and volunteer leaders will be required to sign the Employee and Volunteer Ministry Application Form at the beginning of their service and again every three years. This statement is a supplement to the personal application, and is maintained in the employee’s personnel file or in departmental notebooks of volunteer forms.
4. For Employees: Any candidate for employment who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect cannot be employed by Myers Park Presbyterian Church without the express written approval of the Personnel Committee, including the Head of Staff and Executive Director. The Personnel Committee, including the Head of Staff and Executive Director, will consider the available information related to the circumstances of the situation in order to make a determination about the employment of the individual in question. Active substance abuse or a conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from employment with children or youth: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, sodomy or abuse of a minor.
5. For Volunteer Leaders: Any candidate for leader service who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect cannot work with children and youth at Myers Park Presbyterian Church. Active substance abuse or a conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from service with children and youth: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, sodomy, or abuse of a minor. The CYP Steering Committee will inform any leader applicant denied the opportunity to

209 serve with children and youth the reason(s) for disqualification and how to access information
210 relevant to the decision.
211 6. In the special circumstance where employees do not have ANY contact and responsibility with
212 youth and children under this policy, a Temporary Supervision Waiver must be completed for each
213 employee.
214

215 III. SUPERVISION

216 **Two-Adult Policy**

217 At least two adults, trained and screened in the MPPC policy, will supervise all church sponsored programs and
218 activities involving children and youth whether on or off campus. Adults must remain in sight of one another at
219 all times except in emergency situations. Non-screened volunteers do not count in the Two-Adult Policy. Non-screened
220 volunteers will always be accompanied by a screened employee and/or volunteer leader. It is permissible for one adult
221 driver to transport several children and youth in a single vehicle in a convoy of vehicles traveling to or from an
222 event. If an employee or volunteer leader will be driving for a ministry event, they must fill out the Employee
223 and Volunteer Motor Vehicle Report Application and approve a Motor Vehicle Report to be run on their behalf
224 before they may drive.
225

226 Since spouses cannot be compelled to testify against one another in a court of law, husbands and wives count as
227 one adult. Adults in leadership roles are expected to avoid situations where they are alone with children and
228 youth by having leadership teams of at least two adults for all activities. The presence of two or more adults
229 prevents awkward circumstances where child abuse could occur or be alleged, allows shared leadership, and
230 facilitates appropriate discipline. This two-adult policy extends to all overnight and off campus-related events.
231 Under no circumstances can one adult alone take or accompany children or youth on an overnight outing.
232

233 When one-on-one interactions between children and youth and employee/volunteers are necessary (e.g. in
234 emergency situations), care must be taken to conduct the meeting in an environment that provides visibility by
235 other adults. Another adult must have knowledge of the employee/volunteer's whereabouts and with whom
236 they are meeting.
237

238 Situations where a single adult is alone with a single child or youth are to be avoided at all times. If a situation
239 arises in which an adult is alone with a child or youth (i.e. an emergency situation) the adult should notify
240 another adult in a leadership role before and/or after the period during which he/she is alone with the child or
241 youth.
242

243 **Adult/Child/Youth Ratios**

- 244 ○ The required adult/child/youth ratios for chaperones for any ministry with children or youth that is held
245 within a contained classroom shall be 1:10, however, best practices highly recommends 1:4. Gender
246 balance is suggested.
- 247 ○ The required adult/child/youth ratios for chaperones for any ministry with children or youth that is held
248 in the gym, outside, on the lawn or off campus shall be 1:6. Gender balance (proportionate number of
249 male and female chaperones) is suggested.
- 250 ○ The required adult/child/youth ratios for chaperones for overnight trips shall be 1:6, however, best
251 practices highly recommends 1:4. Gender balance (at least two male and two female adult
252 chaperones) is required.
253

254 **Open Door Policy**

255 Doors to rooms in which children and youth are present are to remain open. If noise increases to a
256 level that disturbs other classes, the door may be shut as long as there is clear glass in at least half the door,
257 nothing impedes vision through the glass, and at least two adults are present. Employees and volunteer
258 leaders are expected to avoid any situation in which they could be alone with children and youth or out of
259 sight of others except in emergency situations. This is to protect:

- 260 a) children against situations in which abuse might occur, and
- 261 b) adults against false accusations of child abuse.
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Six Months Policy

Any volunteer leader in a leadership position with children or youth must have been a member of MPPC for at least six months. Any exceptions must be approved by the CYP Steering Committee for each specific volunteer opportunity. No exceptions will be granted for overnight situations. A waiver form is to be submitted for each exception requested. See the Child and Youth Protection Waiver Form attached.

Temporary Supervision Waiver

In unusual or extreme circumstances (e.g. six-month policy), a Temporary Supervision Waiver must be completed by a ministry area detailing the reason for the waiver, time frame, and approved by either the Executive Pastor or Operations Director. The waiver should be completed two weeks prior to the ministry event or upon awareness of not being able to follow any supervision policy. See the Child and Youth Protection Temporary Supervision Waiver Form attached.

Training for Adults

All employees, all church officers, and any volunteer leaders, who work with children and youth, are required to attend a training session and sign the relevant documents regarding child and youth protection. The church will offer regular training opportunities. This training will include the following:

- The need for the Child Protection Policy
- Definition of child abuse
- Preconditions for child sexual abuse to occur
- Definition of inappropriate conduct
- Church policies governing working with children and youth
- Two Adult Policy
- Open Door Policy
- Procedures for reporting allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protection issues
- Procedures for responding to allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protection issues
- Supervising and chaperoning children and/or youth

Following successful completion of the above training and approval of their application, employees and volunteer leaders may be deemed eligible to work with children and youth at MPPC. Training sessions must be renewed every three years and background checks will be renewed every three years, or at the discretion of the Steering Committee.

Training for Children and Youth

Parents bear the primary responsibility for teaching their children about child and youth protection and safety issues. Nonetheless, from time to time, MPPC may offer age- appropriate educational opportunities for children and youth to provide them with necessary information about child and youth protection issues, including their right to be free from unwelcome and inappropriate touching or remarks, how to report their concerns, and church policies regarding their safety. Parents will be advised prior to any such educational sessions.

Adult Leadership Form

All departments that engage in ministries with children and/or youth are required to submit an Adult Leadership Form to the Executive Pastor’s office for the CYP Steering Committee in order to document compliance with this policy. This form tracks membership status, compliance with training, ensures proper ratios, acknowledges background checks and transportation requirement compliance. A separate form must be submitted for each activity, event, trip or ministry. If two different age groups are attending the same ministry, two separate forms must be completed and submitted. Overnight ministries must submit the ALF no later than one month before the activity, event, trip or ministry. Non-overnight ministries must submit the ALF no later than two weeks before the activity, event, trip or ministry.

Code of Conduct

1. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders will not verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually abuse children.

- 321 2. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders will not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by
322 failing to provide the necessities of care.
- 323 3. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders may use physical restraint only in situations necessary to
324 protect the child or others from harm.
- 325 4. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders will provide proper supervision and exercise sound judgment in
326 providing a safe environment at all times.
- 327 5. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders will avoid situations during MPPC programs where they
328 would be alone with a single child and cannot be observed or monitored by others. As adults
329 supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other adults can see them.
- 330 6. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders are expected to observe the Two-Adult Policy and Open-Door
331 Policy in their interaction with children and youth at all times except in an emergency situation.
- 332 7. Restroom supervision:
- 333 o MPPC employees and volunteer leaders will always use proper supervision when children are
334 using public bathrooms to ensure their safety.
- 335 o MPPC employees and volunteer leaders will call on leaders who may be “floating” from room to
336 room to assist with restroom supervision in order to maintain the two- adult rule.
- 337 o MPPC employees and volunteer leaders will make sure suspicious or unknown individuals are
338 not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities.
- 339 o Children will be sent in pairs, and whenever possible, with MPPC employees and volunteer
340 leaders. MPPC employees and leaders will stand in the doorway while children are using the
341 restroom in visual sight of another adult. This policy allows privacy for the children and
342 protection for the MPPC employees and leaders (i.e. not being alone with a child).
- 343 o If MPPC employees and volunteer leaders are assisting younger children, doors to the facility
344 must remain open.
- 345 8. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders will respect the rights of children and youth not to be touched in
346 ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Adults will discourage children from
347 touching others in an inappropriate manner.
- 348 9. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children
349 entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the Associate
350 Pastor for Children and their Families or the Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families who will
351 report to the CYP Steering Committee and the Head of Staff or the Executive Director of MPPC. If the
352 Associate Pastors mentioned above are not available, MPPC employees and leaders should call the
353 church on-call pastor at any time in order to report. (704.376.3695)
- 354 10. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders should release children (fifth grade and younger) only to the
355 authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized in writing by the parent or guardian.
- 356 11. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or being impaired by
357 legally prescribed drugs during church working hours or church sponsored programs is prohibited.
- 358 12. Smoking is allowed only in designated areas. Smoking or use of tobacco during church programs is
359 prohibited.
- 360 13. Profanity, inappropriate language or jokes, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children or
361 parents is prohibited.
- 362 14. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders will not share inappropriate details of their personal life or
363 ask children to share inappropriate details through any form of communication: written, verbal or
364 electronic.
- 365 15. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders may not date program participants under 18 years of age.
- 366 16. Because gift giving can be a form of “buying” silence or loyalty, gift giving must be done on a group
367 basis and for specific occasions only (e.g. baptism, 3rd grade Bibles, confirmation and graduation).
368 MPPC employees and volunteer leaders are not allowed to give gifts to individual children or youth
369 without knowledge and permission of parents and MPPC minister / department head.
- 370 17. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders are required to read, sign and adhere to all policies related to
371 identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and attend training sessions on the subject, as
372 instructed by a supervisor.
- 373 18. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders are required to report to the Head of Staff or Executive
374 Director any circumstances that under this policy affect their ability to work with children and youth.
- 375 19. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders may learn of situations where a child or youth are currently
376 or may in the future plan harm to themselves or others. Employees or volunteer leaders will report

377 this information to clergy or the staff person over the ministry area. Clergy will report this to the
378 child's parent or guardian. This step is in addition to and not a replacement of North Carolina's
379 mandatory reporting laws.
380

381 IV. WELCOMING ALL 382

- 383 1. We believe God's grace is unlimited, the Holy Spirit is at work within all people, and all persons are God's
384 beloved children. Our leaders, our staff and our congregation hope to demonstrate what it looks like to be a
385 fully inclusive body of Christ. You are invited to join us.
- 386 2. The following are best practices and procedures to allow accommodations to assure that each person is
387 included in our community and create a safe space.
 - 388 ○ Make no assumptions about a person's sexual orientation or identity. Identity can be fluid,
389 especially with children and youth, so approach each conversation open and unassuming.
 - 390 ○ Do not enforce or reinforce gender stereotypes.
 - 391 ○ Acknowledge and celebrate an individual's preferred name.
 - 392 ○ Respect an individual's privacy. If an individual shares their sexual orientation or gender identity
393 with you in confidence, honor that confidence. We will strive to provide a safe place and minister
394 to each individual. Do not share with other leaders, students, or parents. Encourage students to
395 share with their parents, but keep their confidence.
 - 396 ○ Be intentional about creating a safe environment and culture by awareness and include in leaders
397 training around homophobic language and bullying. There will be no tolerance for exclusivity or
398 language that is homophobic, bullying, judgmental or dismissive by a child, youth, or volunteer.
- 399 3. When assigning LGBTQIA+ persons to Groups for Programming, and Activities:
 - 400 ○ The 2 Adult and Open Doors rules already provide the first barrier of protection for both children
401 and youth and for volunteers for groups, and activities.
 - 402 ○ When relevant to programs, youth ministry will strive to provide at least one co-ed group for each
403 age group. Youth then have the option of a female group, male group, or coed group.
- 404 4. Please speak to a member of the CYP Steering Committee should changes or decisions need to be made
405 regarding overnight accommodations or restroom use or signage. Always err on the side of compassion
406 when making decisions regarding LGBTQIA+ persons.
407

408 V. SOCIAL MEDIA 409

410 **Communicating with Children and Youth**

- 411 ○ **Privacy Settings.** Set stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile if you are an adult
412 ministering to children and youth.
- 413 ○ **Youth Leaders.** Grant the Associate Pastor for Youth and their Families full access to your profile and
414 correspondence if you accept friend requests from minors or youth associated with our community of
415 faith.
- 416 ○ **Abuse and Neglect.** Remember material on any site (church-affiliated or not) that raises suspicion that a
417 child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy
418 and/or the Department of Social Services (DSS).
- 419 ○ **Two-Person Rule.** Note that any and all private communication between a child/youth and adult must
420 include two adults, preferably one being the Associate Pastor for Youth and their Families or the
421 Associate Pastor for Children and their Families.
- 422 ○ **Group Page.** Keep in mind that the best way to communicate is through a group page set up by the
423 church. Tie events to the group page.
- 424 ○ **Limit Commentary on Pictures.** Remember, if you are an adult, limit comments to just one or two
425 photographs on a child/youth's page. Otherwise it can be perceived as intrusive and make the
426 child/youth feel uncomfortable.
427

428 **Groups on Social Networking Sites – Youth**

- 429 ○ **It Takes Two.** Be sure each group has at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two
430 youth participants.
- 431 ○ **Closed Versus Hidden.** Choose closed, not "hidden" groups, for youth.
- 432 ○ **Inviting Youth.** Let youth take the lead when it comes to group invitations. Youth administrators
433

- 433 should invite their peers, unless a youth specifically asks you to invite him/her.
- 434 ○ **Appropriate Content.** Create behavioral covenants to govern appropriate content for an online youth
- 435 group.
- 436 ○ **Consequences.** Report any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises
- 437 suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited to the clergy and/or the North
- 438 Carolina Division of Social Services (DSS). If the material is on a church- affiliated site, that material
- 439 should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DSS
- 440 and/or police.
- 441 ○ **Inappropriate Behavior.** Address any content that depicts inappropriate behavior during a church-
- 442 sponsored event or activity with fellow youth leaders and parents.
- 443 ○ **Open to parents.** Open social networking groups for youth to current members' parents.
- 444 ○ **Former Youth Workers.** Remove former adult leaders and youth members from digital
- 445 communication via the church's social networking sites after youth "age-out" of a program or leaders
- 446 depart from their current positions.
- 447

448 VI. REPORTING

449

450 The law and this MPPC policy make the responsibility for reporting Child Abuse and Suspicions of

451 Child Abuse very clear. See Section VII and VIII of this policy for guidance and direction regarding

452 reporting of and responding to Child Abuse and Suspicions of Child Abuse

453

454 A. Allegations

- 455 1. Every employee and volunteer leader of Myers Park Presbyterian Church is required to
- 456 report any situation which presents a suspicion that child abuse may have occurred. Such report
- 457 shall be made to the Associate Pastor for Children and their Families or the Associate Pastor for
- 458 Youth and Their Families, in no case more than 24 hours after such occurrence, who will report to
- 459 the CYP Steering Committee and the Head of Staff or the Executive Director.
- 460 2. Any report of child abuse made by a child about their care by a parent, guardian, youth, adult, or MPPC
- 461 staff employee or leader, despite how unlikely such report may seem, must be relayed to the Associate
- 462 Pastor for Children and their Families or the Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families who will
- 463 report to the CYP Steering Committee, and Head of
- 464 Staff or the Executive Director of MPPC.
- 465 3. The Pastor or Executive Director shall, as required by law, report the situation to the
- 466 Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services or other local authorities for
- 467 investigation.
- 468 4. All concerns and reporting shall be kept confidential.
- 469 5. Concerns may be left at the confidential email address at concerns@myersparkpres.org or after-hours
- 470 by calling the pastor on-call at 704-376-3695.
- 471

472 B. Concerns

473 From time to time issues arise regarding the conduct of our children, youth and adults

474 at MPPC, and the Children and Youth Ministry Programs that are not clearly abuse related issues but impinge

475 upon child and youth protection and safety, and may require attention and review. Sometimes patterns and

476 trends of a questionable nature may be noticed. This section provides a means to report such issues other than

477 Child Abuse in a manner that will assure the issues, patterns, or trends are recorded for subsequent review,

478 addressed, and resolved.

479

480 Examples of issues reported might include:

- 481 † lack of adherence to the Child and Youth Protection Policy;
 - 482 † observations of inappropriate class or group conduct or activities during MPPC sponsored events for
 - 483 Children and Youth;
 - 484 † potentially inadequate, inappropriate, or unwise leadership of children and youth Ministry Activities.
- 485

- 486 1. All adults, youth and children are encouraged to report any issues. These are to be reported as soon as
- 487 possible to the responsible adult leadership at the time the issue is observed. Such notification may be
- 488 oral.

2. When it is appropriate or more comfortable, anyone who wishes to have a concern addressed is encouraged to bring the issue to the attention of the Associate Pastor for Children and Families and/or the Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families either verbally or in writing. All disciples are encouraged to be responsible in identifying issues.
3. Specific concerns shall be communicated to the Child and Youth Protection Policy Steering Committee in a timely manner. The Steering Committee is available to hear concerns from any member or employee of MPPC related to protection and safety concerns of children and youth.
4. You may also send concerns to concerns@myersparkpres.org.

VII. RESPONDING

A. Allegations

In the event of an allegation of child abuse, the following procedures shall be followed at Myers Park Presbyterian Church:

1. Every allegation shall be taken seriously. Adequate care, respect, and confidentiality shall be offered to alleged victims and perpetrators until the allegation is substantiated or cleared.
2. The Executive Director will immediately contact the MPPC attorney and liability insurance carrier.
3. In consultation with the MPPC attorney the following may be appropriate:
 - a. The Head of Staff may notify the parent(s) or legal guardian of the alleged victim.
 - b. The Head of Staff and/or the Executive Director may notify the accused individual.
4. Written documentation, relating to the matter, shall be kept in a confidential file.
 - a. The Head of Staff, Executive Director and/or the Personnel Committee may complete an internal investigation in addition to that which will be carried out by the authorities, following the required notifications.
 - b. An individual accused of child abuse may be placed on leave from his/her responsibilities at the discretion of the Head of Staff, Executive Director or Personnel Committee. For employees, this may be with or without pay.
 - c. To protect the child or youth from further possible abuse or harassment, MPPC will prohibit the accused individual access to the alleged victim and other children and youth in ministries sponsored by MPPC.
 - d. In the event of an unsubstantiated allegation, the Head of Staff or the Executive Director will make a determination as to whether the individual will be allowed to return to work as an employee or volunteer at the Church. They will consider the individual's likely effectiveness in working with children/youth following an allegation and investigation of child abuse. An employee has the right to appeal the decision to the Personnel Committee. A volunteer has the right to appeal the decision to the Clerk of Session who will address the situation with the Session in the appropriate time and manner.
5. MPPC employees and volunteer leaders are expected to cooperate fully with the investigation authorities, with guidance from the MPPC attorney.
6. All MPPC employees and volunteers will refer any inquiries regarding the situation to the CYP Steering Committee. The Head of Staff, or his/her designee, shall be the only person authorized to release any information regarding an allegation except where the law requires others to release information, such as to a protective services investigator or a police officer.
7. All MPPC employees and volunteers are expected to avoid denial, minimization, or blame during the period of investigation of the allegation.

B. Concerns

1. Every report of a concern regarding the children or youth of MPPC shall be evaluated to determine if it in fact represents a report or a suspicion of Child Abuse. Such concerns will be processed as described by this policy.
2. The Child and Youth Protection Steering Committee shall evaluate any report of a concern related to child and youth protection and safety, even if it does not fall under the legal definition of abuse or its suspicion, to assure proper follow up on the issue.
3. All concerns reported shall be documented and maintained for long term review of notable trends or

545 patterns of unacceptable activity by the Steering Committee. If a trend or pattern develops the
546 Steering Committee will determine appropriate action. If a conflict of interest is noted during the
547 review, other church staff will perform the review.
548 Over a longer term, the file of written concerns shall be reviewed in summary form by the
549 Steering Committee.
550

551 **VIII.ADDRESSING KNOWN OFFENDERS WHO ARE MEMBERS**

552 At Myers Park Presbyterian Church, we seek to live in covenant with God and with one another and to be a
553 redemptive community to all who are members. We also acknowledge that redemptive action and
554 responsible action can, at times, be in tension or even in seeming opposition. We embrace this fact as a natural part
555 of seeking to be the church in the world.
556

557 We adopt these procedures for ministering to those among us who are known offenders of children and youth while
558 maintaining our focus on protecting the children and youth of our church

- 559 1. Known offenders will be encouraged to make their status and any terms of probation known to the
560 Pastor.
- 561 2. The Steering Committee will appoint a group of 3-5 members to establish appropriate boundaries, in
562 writing, governing the life of the offender within the church, including areas on campus where he/she
563 may go unaccompanied. Group members will receive training in protection of children and youth and
564 in dealing with known offenders. No decisions made by this group will conflict with any provisions of
565 the MPPC Child and Youth Protection Policy.
- 566 3. The known offender will give written acknowledgement and acceptance of MPPC's Child and Youth
567 Protection Policy and of the boundaries imposed.
- 568 4. At no time is a known offender to be assigned to ministries with children and youth.
- 569 5. At no time is a known offender to congregate with children and youth
- 570 6. At no time is a known offender allowed in areas of the church or grounds dedicated to children and youth
571 or in use primarily by children and youth.
- 572 7. As circumstances warrant, the Steering Committee may identify a known offender to church
573 employees and leaders whose ministries should be informed of this fact.
- 574 8. Known offenders will receive the normal pastoral care afforded any member.
- 575 9. Should a known offender disregard the terms established in this policy, or should a known offender
576 disregard any boundaries or conditions set by the Steering Committee and his/her appointed group,
577 the violation will be handled through the Rules of Discipline in the Constitution of the Presbyterian
578 Church (U.S.A.).
579

580 **END OF POLICY**
581