



Jamestown Presbyterian Church

Our Commitment to Youth and Children  
Safe Sanctuary Policy

Adopted: January 2020

**Purpose:** Our purpose in expanding and clarifying the Safe Sanctuary Policy is to demonstrate our total and unyielding commitment to the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of all our children and youth. As Jamestown Presbyterian Church (JPC) is a loving community of Christians we want to ensure JPC is a safe and welcoming place for children, youth and adults. This policy and its procedures mitigate the risks of abuse and protects adult leaders and volunteers from possible allegations of inappropriate behavior or child abuse.

**Statement of Policy:** Jamestown Presbyterian Church is committed to the ministry of Jesus Christ and is dedicated to the spiritual growth of all members and visitors. Ensuring a safe and secure environment is critical to this commitment. It is the policy of JPC that all members, non-member employees, church officers, and volunteers associated with the church, maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationships at all times. Sexual misconduct is a violation of the principles set forth in Scripture, and of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, professional relationship and often of State Law. It is NEVER permissible, acceptable, or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power to breach Christian ethical principles. Further, to use that authority to take advantage of another for personal pleasure is abusive, exploitive, and unjust. It is the responsibility of Christians to protect the vulnerable from harm. It follows that Christian leaders are therefore responsible to maintain their appropriate roles and prohibit sexual misconduct, or abuse, particularly involving the vulnerability of children, and others who may be less powerful to act in their own welfare.

Our commitment:

- We will use reasonable screening measures, including background checks, when selecting and recruiting employees and volunteers.
- We will train and retrain our adult leaders, staff, employees and volunteers on policy and procedures to ensure adults are aware of Safe Sanctuary policy and guidelines.
- We will gain commitment from all adult leaders, staff, employees and volunteers to abide by this policy and to follow its guidelines.
- We will implement needed operational and physical property changes to ensure compliance with Safe Sanctuary Policy and guidelines.
- We will develop and clearly communicate a policy regarding the reporting of and responding to allegations of child abuse and/or sexual misconduct.

Confidentiality:

JPC will treat as confidential any and all information received in the application process for adult leaders, staff, employees and volunteers. Data will be kept in a locked location with limited access restricted to only the Senior Minister, dedicated member of staff and Session members serving on the Administrative Ministry team. Any data received online will be stored in a secured location through a properly vetted third party provider. Administration Elders, Ordained staff, and one additional staff member as designated by Senior Minister and Administration Chair will be responsible for decisions pertaining to the integrity and security of data in the Safe Sanctuary Policy as well as recommendations for any changes to the general policy and procedures. Recommendations for pertinent changes must be made to Session with the approval by a vote of Session members.

## **Terms and Definitions:**

- Adult: any individual who is at least 18 years of age.
- Child or Youth: persons under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law.
- Leader: an adult designated by JPC responsible for the supervision of youth or children. They must be at least 18 years of age or 21 years old if overnight supervision is involved. Leaders will be at least 5 years older than the oldest child in the group they are supervising.
- Church: Jamestown Presbyterian Church, JPC
- Employee: any person who works for JPC and is paid on an hourly or salaried basis. For purposes of this policy this includes staff of Jamestown Presbyterian Preschool (JPP).
- Volunteer: any person not employed by JPC who may teach, supervise, or assists with youth events or activities or is frequently in the presence of youth at church activities.
- Child abuse: when a parent or caregiver, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm or risk of serious harm to a child. There are many forms of child maltreatment, including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation and emotional abuse.
  - Neglect: when a parent or caregiver does not provide the care, supervision, affection needed for a child's health, safety and wellbeing.
  - Emotional abuse: a pattern of behavior over time impacting a child's emotional development.
  - Sexual abuse: any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or third person or financial/material gain. The behavior may or may not include touching. This behavior is ALWAYS considered forced even if consented to by the child. Sexual child abuse also can include exposure to pornographic or obscene images as well as exposing children to filming and/or transmitting pictures of children in provocative behaviors.

## **Procedures:**

### **I. Screening**

- a. Staff: All applicants for any paid full or part time employment at JPC will be required to provide or complete:
  - i. A reference check from their 3 previous employers. If these are not available, then the applicant must submit personal references from at least 3 people unrelated to the applicant.
  - ii. A criminal background check including criminal databases and national sexual offender registries such as the National Criminal Database and Sex Offender Registries.
  - iii. An application and the related waivers and releases allowing JPC to check references and background information.
  - iv. New staff members will be provided an orientation on the Safe Sanctuary Policy and will be required to undergo child safety training.
  - v. Upon hiring, the new employee will be provided a copy of the Safe Sanctuary policy and must sign an acknowledgement that they have been provided a copy of the policy, they understand it and will comply with it.

Any (potential) candidate for employment who has been convicted of (or has a case pending of) child abuse or neglect will not be employed by JPC. Conviction of any of the following will immediately disqualify a candidate for consideration

and/or employment: rape, assaults, indecent exposure or abuse of a minor. Other convictions may lead to the disqualification of the candidate.

The background checks will be reviewed by the Chair of the Administration Ministry team or their designee. Background checks on staff personnel will be conducted every 5 years.

- b. Leaders and Volunteers: At JPC, all leaders and volunteers who will be supervising youth or children must be at least 18 years of age, but at least 5 years older than the oldest child supervised. Children of at least 12 years of age may volunteer, but they must be under direct adult supervision. Adult volunteers who will be working with youth or children will be required to provide or complete a Volunteer Application form which will include:
  - i. A request for information on past convictions or crimes.
  - ii. Acknowledgement that individual has no history of sexual misconduct or child abuse.
  - iii. A release allowing JPC to check references and background information  
Note: References and background checks will not be conducted on volunteers under 18 years of age. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have a permission form filled out and signed by a parent or legal guardian.
  - iv. New volunteers will be required to undergo child safety training.
  - v. Each new volunteer, when accepted will be provided a copy of the Safe Sanctuary policy and must sign an acknowledgement that they have been provided a copy of the policy, they understand it and will comply with it.

Any volunteer candidate who has been convicted of (or has a case pending of) child abuse or neglect may not work with youth or children at JPC. Conviction of any of the following will immediately disqualify a candidate for consideration and/or employment: rape, assaults, indecent exposure or abuse of a minor. Other convictions may lead to the disqualification of the candidate.

The background checks will be reviewed by sitting Administration Elders and ordained staff with appropriate information provided to the Chair of the respective Ministry team. Background checks for current volunteers will be conducted every (3 – 5) years.

Youth volunteers will not need a background check nor volunteer training but will be asked to fill out a form asking for emergency contact information as well as permission from their parent or guardian.

Six Month Rule: JPC will not use anyone as a volunteer for children or youth in the church unless they have been a member or active participant of JPC for at least six months. This does not apply to paid staff. The Chair of the Christian Education (CE) team may waive the six-month rule upon consultation with the Senior Minister and the Chair of the Administrative Ministry Team.

Leaders or sponsors of other groups using facilities at JPC (Scouts, neighborhood associations, Jamestown Youth League, etc.) will be provided a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy. They must sign a form, provided by JPC, indicating that they have received and read the policy and will be a partner with JPC in a commitment to child safety.

## II. Training

All new staff members and volunteers will receive a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy of Jamestown Presbyterian Church and will be asked to acknowledge that they did receive it. The Senior Minister and Administrative Ministry team shall ensure that yearly training meetings are scheduled with the focus of training being on child protection. Attendance at this training (or online courses, if available) is REQUIRED of all paid staff members, and volunteers who primarily work with children and or youth.

## III. Guidelines for Supervision of Youth

At all times an adult should avoid situations when they are alone in a room with children. Any adult who is with children at a JPC sponsored event, should be accompanied by another adult and programs will be structured so that no adult or volunteer is left alone with children. In no case should a staff person or volunteer be in a situation where they are alone with a child where they cannot be observed by others. For purposes of the Safe Sanctuary Policy, the following will apply:

- a. An adult who roams in and out of classrooms or moves about from one activity to another may be counted as one adult (the leader or staff person should be sure to tell the “Roamer” that they need to cover all areas/rooms).
- b. Two adults from the same immediate family are counted as one adult.
- c. Adults are at least 18 years of age. At least one adult should be 25 years old.
- d. At JPC and/or on church premises:
  - i. Rule of 2: In volunteering for youth activities, two adults will be present at all JPC sponsored events and activities.
  - ii. Classrooms: Any one-child, one-adult situation should be in a clearly observable area with knowledge of another staff person.
  - iii. Classrooms or youth activity areas will have windows which permits visibility from the hallway. Windows should not be covered. If windows are not present, then the door must always be kept open.
  - iv. “Open Door”: Classrooms or any program areas for children or youth may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers.
  - v. When an emergency or other situation requires an adult to be alone with a child, another adult close by should be notified of the situation as reasonably soon as possible.
  - vi. If a one to one, adult to child, situation arises (emergency, illness, transportation) parent permission should be obtained either in writing or via the telephone.
  - vii. Pastoral counseling often requires closed door situations. In this case, the Pastor(s) should notify another staff member of this situation. It is preferred that other people be nearby, but not within listening distance
  - viii. Staff and volunteers may not discipline a child by use of physical punishment or failing to provide the necessities of care.
  - ix. Physical restraint is only acceptable in situations to protect the child, or others from harm.
  - x. Staff and volunteers should use good judgement and common sense regarding physical contact. A child’s rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable should be respected.

- xi. Volunteers should do everything in their power to avoid situations where they are alone with a youth/child and not in the line of sight with at least one adult
- xii. Diapering of infants should be done by staff members. If at all possible, the child's parents should be called to change the diaper if they are at church.
- xiii. Before using the bathroom, volunteers or staff should ensure that the bathroom is unoccupied by anyone prior to the child entering the bathroom. The staff or volunteer will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. This allows the child some privacy and is consistent with our policy of an adult not being alone with a child.
- xiv. Parents and volunteers should strongly encourage the children to use the bathroom prior to any service, program or activity.
- xv. The following are guidelines for student to staff ratios. Every situation is different and exceptions should be discussed with the Senior Minister or the Chair of Christian Education (CE):

Up to 2 years old: 1:8

2's: 1:10

3's and 4's: 1:15

5's: 1:20

- xvi. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs will not be tolerated.
  - xvii. The use of tobacco, tobacco products or vaping in the presence of our youth/children is not permitted.
  - xviii. Profanity, sexually explicit or inappropriate jokes or stories is prohibited.
  - xix. Staff and volunteers must immediately report inappropriate touching and behavior as per policy guidelines to the immediate supervisor of the individual involved. This does not pertain to abuse where specific reports and actions must be taken.
  - xx. No staff or volunteer are to give gifts to an individual child or young person without the prior knowledge of and approval by the Senior Minister or the director of JPP.
  - xxi. Staff and adult volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with program participants under the age of 18.
  - xxii. Possessing or using concealed weapons while working or volunteering at any JPC sponsored activity involving youth or children is prohibited.
- e. Travel or Off-Site Camps, Conferences or Retreats:
- i. All appropriate Permission Forms, Medical Consent Forms and waivers must be obtained by the participant prior to the trip.
  - ii. In no situation will a youth or child be taken from the grounds of JPC or a JPC sponsored activity or event without the permission of the parent or guardian.
  - iii. On any off-site activity the Rule of 2 will be strictly observed: without exception.
  - iv. Ratios: For overnight events an adult to child/youth ratio of 1:6 is preferred with a gender balance required.
  - v. Rooming arrangements should provide that youth and children of the same sex to room together and adults of the same sex to room together. Ordinarily, adults should not share rooms with children.
  - vi. Driving rules and travel are dictated by JPC policies and through the church insurance company. All requirements by them are non-negotiable and strictly

enforced. All drivers must meet the approval of the JPC property committee and be a minimum 25 years of age

- vii. If more than one vehicle is used, one adult should be designated as the lead contact and have a cell phone in case of emergency.
- viii. Both vehicles should have at least one adult leader or adult volunteer with a cell phone and phone numbers should be exchanged in case of problems.

#### IV. Social Media

It is recognized that the use of Facebook, Twitter, etc. is an integral part of today's society and major part of communications and lifestyle, especially for our youth and children. JPC recognizes that social media is important in the life of the church, but when youth are involved more attention and care needs to be devoted to what is being said, and how it could be interpreted. JPC Social Media administrator(s) will be responsible for decisions pertaining to social media and to ensure that use of Social Media is consistent with the guidelines for Safe Sanctuary.

Therefore, realizing that technology is advancing at a rapid pace, these guidelines should be adhered to:

- a. Staff and volunteers should not engage in social media (Facebook, texting, email) with an individual child unless it is approved by the Administrator(s) and it is through an approved app. It may be appropriate to contact an entire team, class or parent. Whenever possible, send messages to groups of people.
- b. Paid staff should consider creating two accounts with one being for personal use. This allows you to maintain a clearer distinction between personal and professional use.
- c. Adults that receive "Friend" requests from minors should communicate with parents/guardians before accepting such requests. There should be no one on a private message between adults and minors on any social media platform.
- d. An adult should not submit a "friend" request to a youth or child.
- e. Paid staff and program leaders should not use social media for pastorally sensitive or legally sensitive.
- f. Adult leaders or staff volunteers should not post pictures of church youth. Pictures of our youth, at JPC-sponsored activities, can be posted by the Administrator(s), consistent with Safe Sanctuary policy, and if permission has been given, in writing, by the parent or guardian.
- g. Social networking groups and contacts for JPC will be done by the appropriate administrators.
- h. Staff or volunteers are not to post pictures of JPC youth or activities without the consent of the JPC administrators for social media.
- i. Do not use social media to share personal frustrations, opinions, or problems. Do not share personal information that you receive without permission from the other party
- j. If a youth/student initiates a connection the youth/student's parent or guardian as well as the volunteer or staff member's supervisor should be notified.
- k. Adults should not "tag" photos nor include identifying information.
- l. Children and youth should NEVER be tagged or identified by name.
- m. Any inappropriate content should be brought to the attention of the Senior Minister and the Administrator(s).

If you are thinking of starting a new group page and/or social media platform, approval must be obtained from the Senior Minister and Social Media administrator(s). A list of all the pages, groups, logins and passwords will be maintained by the Church Administrative Assistant.

## V. Reporting

As members of Jamestown Presbyterian Church, we vowed to surround our youth and children in Christian love and to help them on their faith journeys. We as members of JPC are committed to protecting our children and providing them with a safe environment in which they are protected from abuse. In addition, it is our legal and moral responsibility to report suspected abuse whenever and wherever it occurs.

If abuse is observed, suspected, or disclosed to a volunteer or a JPC staff member the following guidelines and communications will apply:

- a. Ensure the protection of the child, and as the situation requires, tend to the immediate needs of that child.
- b. **Immediately** contact the Senior Minister first or if not available, contact the Associate Minister. This person will then take the lead in any subsequent steps or actions. If ordained staff is not available, the Chair of the Administrative Ministry team should be contacted.
- c. **Immediately** contact the Guilford County Department of Social Services, Child Protection Unit. This is required by North Carolina State Law.
- d. If the accused is the Senior or Associate Minister, the Chair of the Administrative Ministry team will be the first point of contact.
- e. Once the safety of the child is assured and proper authorities contacted, the accused should be removed from involvement with youth and children. The accused will be informed of the accusation and will temporarily be released of his or her duties at JPC. Pay for that individual will be suspended. Do not attempt to ask questions or investigate the incident. This should be left to the authorities.
- f. If a child or youth, the Senior Minister or designee will contact the parents of the victim and do whatever is required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child. If child abuse is suspected, authorities **MUST** be contacted regardless of the wishes of the parents. If one or both parents are the accused, then defer to the advice of the authorities regarding notification of others.
- g. The Senior Minister and the sitting Elders on the Administrative Ministry team will ensure that written documentation is kept and that proper notifications (Presbytery, legal counsel) are made. This document will be considered as Confidential and will be kept in a secured, locked location.
- h. The Senior Minister and the Administrative Ministry team will, as soon as possible, conduct an internal investigation and complete an Incident Report form utilizing all available information.
- i. In consultation with the Senior Minister, the Administrative Ministry team will take the appropriate steps regarding the employment or volunteer status at JPC.

The above are guidelines and steps on reporting of abuse. Any observations of inappropriate behavior, communication, or touching not rising to the level where other action is required should be reported to the immediate supervisor of that staff member or volunteer. That supervisor is encouraged to work directly with that person in resolving the situation. The Senior Minister should be apprised of the situation, and the resolution. Proper documentation will be retained in the employee file. When in doubt, any staff member, leader or volunteer should discuss the situation with the Senior Ministry