



SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Code of Conduct

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Gilbert Presbyterian Church Safe Church Policy — Summary

Children's Safety Tips

To keep everyone safe, please follow these basic steps from our Safe Church Policy. Full policy may be found in bright pink folders in the Sunday School cabinets and also in the church office. Staff at GPC have a background check to help ensure security; in all other cases, children's safety will be ensured by following the policy of having classrooms with windows and/or open doors, or having more than one adult in the classroom.

1. Our classrooms are open, and we invite parents to observe or stay in the classroom. All classrooms have windows, enabling observers to view activities. This allows us to have a minimum of one teacher per group of children.
2. Make sure younger children are escorted to the bathroom. You may retain the help of another teacher or a child's parent if needed. Remain outside the bathroom if no one else is in the bathroom or wait inside if there are others in the restroom.
3. No child shall be left unattended inside or outside on the church campus.
4. A first aid kit is in the nursery if needed (band aids, antiseptic, etc.). If a more significant emergency warrants, call 911 and get assistance from another adult. If needed, perform CPR or get help from adults onsite.
5. Keep children protected from any illegal actions, abuse, physical neglect/injury or emotional injury.
6. Listen to and observe students. Notice signs of physical abuse or emotional changes with your students. Sometimes it is hard to determine what is different, but remember that if it doesn't seem right, it usually isn't. Contact the pastor. The Arizona Child Abuse Hotline # is 1-888-767-2445.
7. Any leader supervising children or youth in a youth group off-campus trip or overnight event should have permission/health forms completed by parents.
8. If any incident should occur, please follow this protocol:
 - Personally secure the safety of the child/youth.
 - Report the incident immediately to the pastor or clerk of Session.
 - Do not personally confront the alleged or accused violator of the policy.
 - Complete a Confidential Incident Report and deliver it to the pastor or clerk of Session.
 - Report abuse and neglect to local authorities as required by law.
 - The pastor or clerk of Session are solely responsible for all communications on behalf of the church.
 - Failure to report a prohibited act immediately will be considered a procedural violation of these guidelines.

Policies and Procedures for Safeguarding Children and Youth And the Adult to Whom They are Entrusted

A Vision for Children and the Church

Our congregation affirms....

...That all children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that does not always value children.

...That we hope for a world where all children can find a safe place.

...That Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in His name.

...That we take seriously our baptismal vow to nurture all children committed to our care.

*Excerpts from "A Vision for Children and the Church"
Adopted by the 205th General Assembly of the PC(USA) in June 1993*

Purpose

Our congregation believes that children and youth are a gift of God to the whole of the human community. They are an integral part of the community contributing to its worship and ministry. It is in the church that children and youth receive nurture and hear the good news of God's love and protection. Therefore, the church must strive to provide safety and security for children and youth as well as for the adults to whom they are entrusted.

Application

These guidelines apply to all congregational activities for children and youth regardless of location, including but not limited to: Nursery/Pre-K care, Children's and Youth Sunday School, Jr and Sr High Youth Connection, Music/Worship programs.

Definition of Terms

Children — Those 12 years of age and younger.

Youth/Teens — Those 13 years of age and older.

Key Leaders — Those with the main responsibility for leadership of a given program.

Mandatory Reporter — Those who are required by state law to report child abuse (ARS §13-3620.A)

Program Volunteers — Those with an ongoing responsibility in a church program (for example, Nursery caregivers, Sunday School teachers, music directors)

Response Team —i.e. Pastor and designated representatives from Session/Christian Education Committee (including the pastor, clerk of Session, and two appointed Session members)

Supplemental Volunteers —Those who assist a given program only under the direct supervision of a key leader or program volunteer (for example, parents who may attend an event with their own child who may assist the leaders, but not left alone with children).

Vulnerable Adult —An individual who is 18 years of older who is unable to protect him/herself from abuse, neglect, or exploitation by others because of a physical or mental impairment.

Safeguards

Approval of Activities. Activities for children and youth must be approved by the Session, presented through the CE committee chair. If similar activities have been approved in past, the information for upcoming activities can be presented to the Christian Education Committee, overseeing the area of the church.

Supervision.

- The Session must approve all employees and all key youth leaders who work with children and youth.
- The Christian Education (CE) Committee must approve of all volunteers who work with children and youth. At least two approved leaders or volunteers must be assigned to lead any activity involving children and youth with the exception of Sunday school class activities due to classroom door windows and “open door/parents welcome” policy.
- For overnight activities, there must be two adults the same gender as participants. In other words, there should be two adult males and two adult females if both male and female youth are present.
- An adult assigned to lead activities involving children and youth must be at least four years older than the oldest participant

After being cleared by the CE Committee, a volunteer who has been active in the life of our congregation for less than six months may be paired with someone who has been an active member or affiliate for longer than six months when working with children and youth.

At least two approved leaders must be assigned to lead any activity involving children and youth unless an exception is approved in advance by the CE Committee. **A parent may waive these supervision guidelines by written consent.**

Dress Code

In order to provide a positive, respectful and healthy atmosphere, Gilbert Presbyterian Church uses a dress code similar to that adopted by most public schools, as follows:

- No clothing that immodestly exposes the chest, abdomen, genital area or buttocks is permitted.
- Undergarments must not show.

- Tops must cover the midriff all the way to the pants. No tube tops or halter tops may be worn.
- Appropriate shirts are required under overalls.
- No clothing shall be worn that advertises drugs, alcohol or tobacco-related items, or contains inappropriate language.

Adult-Child Ratio

For all activities, an adult-child ratio of 2:10 shall be maintained, except that a ratio of 2:25 may apply to a classroom environment with children above the age of 12. In all cases, including the times when only one adult may be available, all activities in the classroom will be visible due to the church policy of having open doors and/or unobstructed windows in the door.

In all classes, an employee or volunteer under the age of 18 working with minor children shall be under the supervision of an adult over the age of 21. Employees or volunteer leaders under the age of 21 shall not supervise or lead a youth group in which the oldest participating minor child is less than four years younger than the supervisor/leader.

Age Requirements of youth volunteers and employees: Leaders shall be at least four years older than the oldest participant of the teen youth group. Other leaders must be at least 18 years old. Teen helpers from the church may assist as long as there is an approved adult leader supervising.

Transportation

Volunteers/employees who drive children and youth on the congregation's behalf must be at least 21 years old, and either be a parent/grandparent of a youth participant or must be approved by CE Committee and/or Session with background check. When possible, there must be at least three people present in any vehicle, either two adults and one child or youth, or one adult and two children or youth; an exception may be granted in an emergency or with the approval of a supervisor or parent. Communications shall be established to verify the whereabouts, expected arrival and change of custody of the child. Any driver operating a vehicle which holds 16 passengers or more, including the driver, shall possess a valid Commercial Driver License (CDL). Safe loading limits of the vehicles being used will be maintained. Employees and volunteers are not to make unauthorized or unplanned stops. All passengers are to be seated, to use seat belts, and to follow safety laws. Employees and volunteers are to be seated in larger vehicles in a way that permits them to supervise young passengers. When passengers must disembark at a rest facility or destination, care shall be taken to obtain a head count on arrival and departure.

A parent may waive these transportation guidelines by written consent. The church may also rotate transportation needs among parents as needed for the transportation schedule. This rotation promotes parent participation and adds an additional adult without requiring parents to participate for every event.

Communication

Prior to any congregational activity for children and youth, leaders will make information about the activity available to children and youth and their parents. This information will include the names of all activity leaders and the drivers who may be providing transportation.

Sign-in

Parents are asked to sign their children in to the Sunday morning nursery program (worship hour) and provide information on how they may be reached (*Appendix A*).

Student Pick-up

Parents will make arrangements with teachers or leaders for picking up their child after an activity. They will provide names and phone numbers to those responsible for pick up and parents are responsible for information leaders/volunteers of any changes.

Parent's Permission

The following documents must be obtained before a child or youth participates in an overnight activity or in an activity occurring away from the church campus: Youth Activity Participation Release (*Appendix B*), and a Medical Release (*Appendix C*). The parent can agree to or decline a Publicity Release (*Appendix D*).

This provision ensures parental consent for children to participate in certain types of activities. As written, it would not prohibit participation in Sunday School or other regular activities at the church, but it would prohibit the child's participation in overnight functions and activities away from the church.

Youth Covenant. A Youth Covenant must be signed by all youth who regularly participate in any congregational activity for Youth (*Appendix E*). A parent or guardian must also sign each Covenant. Covenants must be renewed at least once each year.

Activity Plan. A Child and Youth Activity Plan must be prepared by staff or activity leaders prior to any overnight activity or any activity occurring outside of the Phoenix Valley area (*Sample: Appendix F*).

Visibility. Interaction between children and youth, and volunteers and employees should be conducted in way that promote visibility by others and remove the opportunity for secrecy and isolation. Where possible, windows should be in all rooms where these interactions occur, and blinds should remain open. Doors should remain open when this is not possible.

No child shall be left unattended on the church campus or off-campus on a church-related outing.

Restroom Protocol. The approved leader/volunteer informs the second leader and then escorts children who are determined to need supervision/assistance, and checks restroom for presence of others. If empty, waits outside; if occupied, waits inside. If children are deemed to be old enough to independently and safely care for restroom needs, they will be permitted to go

to the restroom without adult escort. In all cases, parents of young children will be encouraged to have their children care for restroom needs prior to the parent's leaving the child at the Sunday school class or other activity.

First Aid and CPR. Volunteers/employees who work with children and youth are encouraged to obtain training in first aid and CPR. Our church will periodically arrange opportunities for this training and will maintain documentation of such training in the church office.

Safety Tips. The CE Elder and/or pastor will provide age-appropriate safety tips to volunteers and employees as part of the ongoing training process.

These safety tips may go beyond child abuse prevention and focus on other safety concerns such as playground safety trip safety, etc.

Screening

Application for Positions. All key leaders, all program volunteers and volunteers (*other than parents/grandparents of participants*) who drive children/youth, and all employees must complete a Confidential Information Form (*Appendix H*) which will be reviewed by the pastor.). There will be an informal interview with the person in charge of the area/program where the volunteer will work. This will include going over the job description of the position the volunteer will fill. Job descriptions provided separately for volunteers will include, but not be limited to: Sunday School teachers VBS volunteers, youth group volunteers, Nursery/Pre-K coordinator and workers.

Applicants seeking employment will follow the screening process for church employees.

Criminal Background Check: Criminal history checks must be conducted for staff and appropriate program volunteers (such as those who are approved to drive children and/or youth). The Pastor will review the criminal history report. If the reports shows a "Not Clear" status, the pastor will discuss the report with the individual. If the individual desires to continue pursuing his or her application to work with children and youth, the report will be submitted to the Personnel or Response Team for review. If these applicants currently hold fingerprint cards through their professions, they may provide a copy to the pastor. Criminal history checks should be updated periodically.

Disqualifying Offenses. Whether disclosed voluntarily or as a result of a criminal history check or motor vehicle report, the following will disqualify a person from participating in the leadership of any activity involving children and youth; any indictment alleging the offense of or any conviction for: murder; aggravated assault; sexual abuse or sexual assault (rape); aggravated sexual assault; injury to a child; incest; indecency or sexual abuse with a child; possession or promotion of child pornography; safely distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor; employment harmful to children; or any other offense, particularly those involving moral turpitude or the use of alcohol or drugs designated by the Session in its discretion. If an individual disputes information that appears in his or her criminal history check or motor vehicle report, he or she may appeal through the appropriate governmental agency.

Disqualification from Driving. Whether disclosed voluntarily or as a result of a criminal history check or motor vehicle report, conviction of any of the following during the preceding ten years will disqualify a person from driving children and youth: driving while intoxicated, aggravated assault with a motor vehicle driving under the influence of drugs, murder with malice with motor vehicle, or failure to stop and render aid.

Approved Employees and Volunteers. Only the pastor will review Confidential Information Forms and related information for each applicable volunteer and employee and, approve or disapprove each application. In making a decision, the nature of any identified offense, how that offense related to the position under consideration, any explanation provided by the applicant, and any other information deemed appropriate should be considered. The pastor will determine any appropriate pastoral response throughout this screening process. The Session will maintain lists of those persons who have been approved to serve as key leaders, program volunteers, or any adults (other than participants' parents/grandparents) who drive children and youth.

Confidentiality

While this screening process understandably intrudes into the privacy of our own lives, our congregation believes that the safety of our children/youth/vulnerable adults outweighs the personal invasion inherent in this process. All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the results of all criminal history checks and background checks, and the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of making such disclosures will be considered confidential. This information will be handled only by the pastor. A neutral third party outside the church may be retained to conduct criminal history checks. These results will be presented to the pastor. The pastor will arrange for a secured storage facility in the church's business office for all confidential information.

Intervention/Prevention

Reporting accidents or prohibited acts

Report of Accident: Respond appropriately with first aid/call for emergency care. Notify parents and other appropriate authorities. In the case of an accidental injury fill out an accident report; and document everything that is done.

Report of Prohibited act: In the event of an allegation of abuse or other prohibited act (either occurring within the church or recognized by signs of abuse elsewhere), the pastor will be the staff person who will be responsible for following the reporting protocol required by state law. If for some reason the pastor is unable to make the report, or if the incident involves the pastor or a member of the pastor's family, the clerk of Session shall be responsible for reporting according to state law. The incident is to be reported to the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) Child Abuse hotline: 1-888-767-2445 or local law enforcement office.

Any person who reasonably believes that a minor is or has been the victim of physical injury, abuse, child abuse, a reportable offense or neglect that appears to have been inflicted on the

minor by other than accidental means or that is not explained by the available medical history as being accidental in nature or who reasonably believes that there has been a denial or deprivation of necessary medical treatment or surgical care or nourishment with the intent to cause or allow the death of an infant who is protected under A.R.S. 36-2281k shall immediately report or cause reports to be made of this information to a peace office or to DCS in the Department of Economic Security, except if the report concerns a person who does not have care, custody or control of the minor, the report shall be made to a peace office only. **See Appendices G (reporting guidelines), I (Confidential incident Report), and J (accident report)**

Report Protocol: (if a second incident occurs after the first make another report)

When reporting, the following information, if known, will be requested:

- Name, age, and gender of child and other family members
- Address, phone numbers, and/or directions to child's home
- Parents' place of employment
- Description of suspected abuse or neglect
- Current conditions of the child

System of Reporting

- Immediate oral reporting to designated individuals; filling out an incident report; and documentation of everything that is done from the time of receiving the allegation. The safety of the child at issue shall be immediately secured and the parent(s) notified.
- As soon as possible, the pastor shall notify the Presbytery.
- The accused individual shall be removed from contact with children until the investigation is completed.
- The church shall designate the response person who will speak on behalf of the church and a response team consisting of the pastor, clerk of Session, CE chairperson and other individuals as deemed appropriate.
- While immediate reporting as per state law must be carried out, the church shall conduct its own internal investigation to determine where Safe Church measures failed and what shall be done to prevent recurrence of such an event.

Witness of Contact Person:

- Anyone witnessing the occurrence of a prohibited act is asked to follow the steps outlined below. If a child or youth reports that a prohibited act occurred while participating in a church activity or involved church volunteers or employees at any time or place, the person initially contacted by the child or youth is asked to follow these same steps.
 1. Personally secure the safety of the child or youth.
 2. Do not leave the child or youth alone to report the incident.
 3. Report the incident immediately to the pastor or the clerk of Session.
 4. Do not personally confront the alleged or accused violator of the policy.
 5. Complete a Confidential Incident Report and deliver it to the pastor or the clerk of Session.

6. Report abuse and neglect to local authorities as required by law.
 7. The Response Team (see next paragraph) is solely responsible for all communications on behalf to the church.
- A prohibited act must be reported immediately and any failure to do so will be considered a procedural violation of these guidelines. The Session may treat such violation as ground for termination of an employee or as grounds for the suspension or prohibition of any person participating in church activities involving children and youth. All questions or concerns regarding any suspected violation should be directed to the pastor or the Session.

Response to Reported Prohibited Acts

- After the pastor or clerk of Session receives a report involving a prohibited act, they will consult with others as needed and take such immediate steps as are deemed appropriate.
- The report will be referred as soon as possible to a Response Team comprised of the pastor, two members of Session, and up to three additional persons appointed by Session who understand the issue of confidentiality.
- The pastor shall be designated as the moderator of the Response Team and is responsible for ensuring that all necessary contact with law enforcement and CPS is made. In the event that the incident involves the pastor or a member of the pastor's family, the clerk of Session shall take the role of moderator with all attendant responsibilities.
- The Response Team shall take such actions as it deems appropriate to the investigation and handling of the report. Designated members of the Response Team will be responsible for all communications on behalf of the church, including those with parents, civil authorities, Presbytery, the church's insurance company, and the media.
- The Response Team will ensure that pastoral care needs are addressed and will notify the accused and the accuser that they have the right to retain their own counsel. The church's counsel will represent the church, but not individual interests.

Consequences of Committing a Prohibited Act

- Any person who is accused of committing a prohibited act, whether a volunteer or employee, will be suspended automatically from any further participation in any church activity for children and youth.
- The suspension will continue until a disposition of the report has been made by the Response Team. The disposition shall be based upon such evidence as the Response Team deems appropriate. The evidence may include the results of any investigation by the church or law enforcement or child protection proceeding or the filing, prosecution or outcome of any criminal charges or other legal proceedings.
- The Response Team may, at its discretion, delay disposition pending the outcome of any investigation or proceeding involving the alleged violation. Upon disposition, if a majority of the Response Team believes from the evidence that any person has committed a prohibited act, such person shall be prohibited from future participation in all church activities for children and youth, either permanently or for such length of time and in such manner as the Response Team shall determine in its discretion.

- If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment.
- If the Response Team determines that the allegations are false, the pastor will determine any appropriate pastoral response.

Oversight

Christian Education Committee. On behalf of the Session, the CE committee oversees the implementation of these guidelines. This committee maintains lists of those persons who have been approved to serve as a leader at any youth activity or to drive children and youth. This committee coordinates the training of volunteers/employees in the CE ministry areas regarding these guidelines.

SAFE CHURCH POLICY* ATTESTATION

***Policies and Procedures for Safeguarding Children and Youth
and the adults to Whom they are Entrusted**

I, _____ (print), attest to the following (Complete area(s) that pertain to you):

- **Attended a Safe Church Policy*training/review (circle one)**
Date: (Month/Year) ____/____

- **Received individual training/review (circle one)**
Date: Month/Year ____/____
From: _____

I acknowledge that I have received and understand the Safe Church Policy* and agree to abide by it.

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Role in Church: _____

(Please notify the Personnel and Christian Ed. Committee if you change roles or are leaving the one you are currently serving.)

Confirmed by: _____ Date: ____/____/____

(Needs to be one of the following: Pastors, Personnel Comm. Member, Christian Ed. Committee member, or Individual trainer.)

**Gilbert Presbyterian Church
Child Protection and Sexual Misconduct
Policy and Procedures**

I. Policy Statement

It is the policy of Gilbert Presbyterian Church (GPC) that all church members, church officers, nonmember employees and volunteers of the congregation governing bodies, and entities of the church are to maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationships at all times. Persons who engage in sexual misconduct are in violation of the principles set forth in Scripture and also of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationship. It is never permissible or acceptable for a church member, officer, employee or volunteer to engage in sexual misconduct.

This policy applies to all members and those who serve in the staff, programs, and positions of leadership (volunteer or paid) in the church.

Distribution

Copies of this policy and its procedures shall be distributed to all teachers, youth leaders and volunteers, plus ruling elders, deacons, and staff of GPC. It is intended as guidance for everyone at GPC, especially those in contact with children/youth/vulnerable adults. This policy and its procedures should be made available to persons who accuse others of misconduct, including those who are or claim to be victims of sexual misconduct and their families.

II. Standards of Conduct

... As (God) who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct;
...Tend the flock of God that is in your charge,...
not under compulsion but willingly,...
not for sordid gain but eagerly...
not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock,
...You know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.
1 Pet. 1:15; 5:2-3; Jas. 3:1, NRSV

The ethical conduct of all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ is of vital importance to the church because through these representatives an understanding of God and the gospel's good news is conveyed. "Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world."

The basic principles of conduct guiding this policy are as follows:

1. Sexual misconduct is a violation of the role of pastors, employees, volunteers, counselors, supervisors, teachers and advisors of any kind who are called upon to exercise integrity, sensitivity and caring in a trust relationship. It breaks the covenant to act in the best interests of parishioners, clients, co-workers, and students.
2. Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation to gain advantage over another for personal

pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. If the parishioner, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is the pastor's, counselor's, officer's, or supervisor's responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship.

3. Sexual misconduct takes advantage of the vulnerability of persons who are less powerful to act for their own welfare, including children, youth, and vulnerable adults. It is antithetical to the gospel call to work as God's servant in the struggle to bring wholeness to a broken world. It violates the mandate to protect the vulnerable from harm.

Definitions

Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy to include:

1. Child sexual abuse; including, but not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not "consented to" by the child. The sexual abuse definition of a child is anyone under age eighteen.
2. Sexual abuse as defined in the *Book of Order*: "Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position" (*Book of Order*, D-10.0401c)
3. Sexual harassment; defined for this policy is as follows: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute equal harassment when
 - a. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or their continued status in an institution;
 - b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual;
 - c. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating hostile or offensive working environment; or
 - d. An individual is subjected to unwelcome sexual jokes, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or display of sexual visuals that insult, degrade, and/or sexually exploit men, women, or children.
4. Rape or sexual contact by force, threat or intimidation.
5. Sexual conduct (such as offensive, obsessive, or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact that makes a person feel uncomfortable (i.e staring, unwelcome touching or fondling) that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.
6. Sexual malfeasance; as defined by the broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship

7. Misuse of technology; use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person including texting or emailing suggestive messages and images to persons with whom one has a ministerial relationship. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.

III. Church Response to Allegations of Sexual Misconduct

1. **Principles.** In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, persons in ordered ministry and employees of the church should seek healing and assure the protection of all persons. Where possible, the privacy of persons should be respected and confidentiality of communications should be maintained. In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, persons in ordered ministry, and employees of the church should seek to uphold the dignity of all persons involved, including persons who are alleging harm, persons who are accused of sexual misconduct, and the families and communities of each. The Session of GPC has jurisdiction over its members, volunteers, and employees such that if a member, volunteer, officer, or employee is alleged to have committed an offense, the Session has the duty to inquire into the allegations and, if the allegations are proven, to correct the behavior of the member, officer, or employee and ensure the safety of others in the community. Allegations of sexual misconduct are always considered allegations of offense against Scripture that trigger the disciplinary processes set forth in the *Book of Order*. In the case of an active non-member who is employed or volunteers with the church, the individual will be covered by the procedures of the written personnel policies of the governing body or entity. If the person accused of sexual misconduct is no longer a member, officer or employee of GPC, but the conduct occurred while the person was acting on behalf of GPC, the church does not have jurisdiction to correct the behavior, but it does have a duty to hear the allegations of offense and to take measures to prevent future occurrences of harm. The Session may appoint an administrative committee or commission to hear the allegations of sexual misconduct. The Session may also take measures to prevent future occurrences of harm through education and policy.
2. **Reporting Requirements**
 - a. Reporting Sexual Misconduct — A person needing to report that a member, officer, employee or volunteer of GPC has committed sexual misconduct is encouraged to seek guidance from a GPC pastor or ruling elder regarding filing the report. If the person who is accused of committing sexual misconduct is a member, ruling elder, deacon, volunteer, or employee of the congregation, the report of allegations should be made to the pastor, the clerk of Session, or the chair of the personnel committee. If the accused is a member or officer of the church, the church will respond by using the procedures set forth in the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the accused is a nonmember employee or volunteer, the church will respond by using procedures set forth by the Session of the congregation.

- b. Cooperation with Investigations — GPC expects and requires the cooperation of all employees in the investigation of violations of the Code of Conduct, GPC Safe Church Policy, or other misconduct, including a complainant, witness, and the accused offender. A person appointed by the Session may interview these individuals privately and take oral and/or written statements from them. Any person who fails to cooperate with such an investigation or to provide complete and truthful information may be subject to disciplinary action.
- c. Notification of Parents — A minor child may be party to an incident either as an initiator or as the victim. Whether a child is initiator or victim may not be clear in all circumstances, such as a child-on-child incident. Violation of policy does not necessarily create a victim. While notification of parents of such circumstances may be warranted, utmost care in communication is required. Therefore, the pastor or anyone having knowledge of an incident which warrants communication to a parent shall first consult with the pastor, CE chair, clerk of Session, or currently serving elders. While communicating with a parent, and being mindful of the importance of timely communication, care shall be given to assessing:
 - 1. The specific facts;
 - 2. Whether a disciplinary or termination process is required;
 - 3. Whether a child should be dismissed from a program (requiring notification of other parents/guardians);
 - 4. Whether “mandatory reporting” is a factor;
 - 5. Who shall and in what manner communicate with the parents/guardian;
 - 6. Whether the pastor should be involved in the communication
 - 7. Necessary action to prevent a further incident.
 - 8. Notification of parents shall not be delayed when immediate medical care is required.
- d. Victim Needs— The Session will attend to the immediate needs of victims by providing support and pastoral care. In the event of cases of reportable abuse, the policy of GPC is to be responsive to the needs of victims within the constraints of obligations imposed under insurance contracts.
- e. Responsibility of Employees and Volunteers — Each employee or volunteer is obligated to fulfill the Code of Conduct and comply with the GPC Safe Church Policy, both by living the standard and helping others to do the same. Each is obligated to guide and gently correct others as they would in a circumstance of high personal risk. When another person, regardless of status, rank or power repeats a violation of the Code of Conduct or Safe Church Policy, the employee/volunteer observer must report the violation to his/her own immediate supervisor, or the next level of authority if necessary. Reporting responsibility includes incidents of child-on child sexual activity, dangerous behaviors, employee-on-employee sexual harassment, bullying of any kind, the exploitation of a vulnerable adult or circumstances which rise to the level of abuse requiring actions by a mandatory reporter.
- f. Receiving Reports of Sexual Misconduct — Reports of allegations of equal misconduct will occur in a variety of ways.

- i. Because the Session cannot control to whom the victim of sexual misconduct will speak first, it is important that officers, employees, and persons highly visible to church members and visitors understand how reports of incidents are channeled to the proper person. The allegations may come from persons who have or who do not have a formal relationship with GPC and may be made to a variety of persons in ordered ministry or leaders within GPC. It is the duty of these persons in ordered ministry to see that an allegation of sexual misconduct is reported appropriately keeping in mind the mandatory reporting requirements for allegations of child abuse.
- ii. Reports of allegations of sexual misconduct should never be taken lightly or disregarded and allowed to circulate without concern for the integrity and reputation of the victim, the accused, and the church. Reports of allegations should be dealt with as matters of highest confidentiality, both before and after they have been submitted to appropriate authorities as outlined below.
- iii. The first person to learn of an incident of sexual misconduct should not undertake an inquiry alone or question either the victim or the accused unless the incident is divulged in the process of pastoral care counseling or a therapy session. If the victim is hesitant to talk to “higher authorities,” the person who has received the initial report has a special pastoral responsibility to build trust and willingness to speak with the accuser, lest the church be unable to respond because no one is able to give firsthand information.
- iv. The person receiving the initial report of allegations of sexual misconduct shall determine the relationship of the person accused of sexual misconduct with GPC and shall make sure that the allegations of offense are reported to the pastor or clerk of Session. This may be done by the person alleging harm or by any member of GPC.
- v. If the report is made orally, the person receiving the report of allegations shall request that the person making the report of allegations place it in writing. A report of allegations of sexual misconduct in writing from a member of GPC alleging another member or officer of GPC committed an offense must be acted on according to the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the clerk of Session receives a report of allegations in writing from a nonmember of GPC alleging another member or officer of GPC committed sexual misconduct, the report should also be acted on according to the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the person who makes the report is unwilling or unable to place it in writing, any member of GPC should make the written statement that will automatically trigger the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*.
- g. Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse—All members engaged in ordered ministry (pastor, ruling elders, and deacons) and Christian educators are required to report knowledge of child abuse to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities according to the *Book of Order*. The *Book of Order* requires that:

- i. Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) he or she is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) he or she reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse (G-4.0302).
- ii. All persons covered by this policy have an additional duty to report knowledge of child sexual abuse to the employing entity, supervisor, and a Session representative. All persons should be informed of and must comply with state and local law as regarding incidents of actual or suspected child sexual abuse. These reports should be made within a reasonable time of receiving the information.
- iii. These provisions of the *Book of Order* attempt to balance conflicting moral duties for officers of GPC. For teaching elders, the provision strives to balance the duty to protect children from future harm with the duty of a minister to hold in confidence any information revealed to them during the exercise of pastoral care in any ministry setting as defined in G-4.0301 in the *Book of Order*. For ruling elders, deacons, and Christian educators, the provision strives to balance the duty of an officer of the church to protect children from harm and any secular duty the officer may have to hold in confidence any information revealed as a result of a secular relationship, such as attorney/client, counselor/client, or physician/patient. The secular duties will be a function of secular law.

3. Responding —The appropriate response will vary according to the relationship of GPC with the person who is accused of sexual misconduct. Church members and persons in ordered ministry are subject to inquiry and discipline (censure and correction) under the *Book of Order*. Non-members of the church, employees and volunteers are subject to oversight and correction by the Session and/or the entity that employs them.

a. *Accused Covered by Book of Order.*

- i. When an allegation of offense of sexual misconduct has been received, the clerk of Session will report to the Session that an offense has been alleged and that the Session will proceed according to the procedures set forth in the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. The Session should appoint an investigating committee to inquire into the allegations. The investigating committee must promptly begin its inquiry into the allegations. Delays may cause further harm to the victim and/or the accused.
- ii. Governing bodies and entities must cooperate with civil authorities in an investigation of child sexual abuse or other criminal sexual misconduct. Church disciplinary proceedings cannot interfere with a criminal investigation by civil authorities and may have to be suspended until these are completed.

- iii. The Session of GPC has original jurisdiction in disciplinary cases involving members, elders, and deacons of the church.
- b. Responding to Media
 - i. Media publicity following an incident of abuse or exploitation may be detrimental to the reputations of individuals, the congregation, and the Presbytery. Without intending ever to evade the media, contacts with media must be managed and conducted only by a person specifically designated by the Session to represent the church. No other person(s) may speak on behalf of the church. Unless designated differently in a particular circumstance, the exclusive spokesperson for the church shall be the Moderator of Session or, if no Moderator is currently appointed, the clerk of Session.
 - ii. Prior to speaking to media, the above designated spokesperson shall contact and consult with legal counsel, to obtain an understanding of appropriate statement or admissions and issues of privacy that may apply to the situation (Insurance Board clients only). The designated spokesperson shall give immediate consideration to securing Insurance Board media relations and crisis management resources. Considering the speed of news cycles, a prompt determination is required, erring on the side of seeking help.
- c. Accused Not Covered by *Book of Order* — When the session receives an accusation of offense of sexual misconduct against a nonmember employee or volunteer, the procedural response of the Session will be guided by the written personnel policies of the Session. The Session will have a personnel committee (Response Team) that will be responsible for the inquiry. The committee or commission that will respond to the allegation of offense of sexual misconduct will do the following:
 - i. Determine whether or not the allegation gives rise to a reasonable suspicion of sexual misconduct by the accused.
 - ii. If so, gather additional information necessary to make a decision about correcting the behavior
 - iii. Determine any remedies, including limiting ministry, suspension, or termination necessary and advisable under the circumstances. If the accused is a member of another denomination, that denomination will be notified of the allegations and the response.
 - iv. Inform the victim and the accused of the remedy.
 - v. In all cases, the personnel committee shall prepare written reports which shall be included in the accused's permanent personnel file. The accused shall be allowed to attach any written statements to said documents, also for permanent inclusion in the permanent file.
 - vi. All procedures shall follow the guidelines set forth by the Session, GPC or an entity of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon
- d. Counsel or Entity Record Keeping— The Session of GPC shall keep detailed records of its actions and minutes of its deliberations and its conversations with the accuser, the accused and other parties involved, correspondence, and copies

of the reports received from committees or commissions. Such records will be kept confidential as far as possible. In Case #208-6, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) interpreted the Rules of Discipline to say that a Council or entity may share the contents of inquiry reports with other governing bodies or entities of the PC (USA) when necessary. The clerk of the Session or director of an entity will maintain the records while the inquiry is in process.

Gilbert Presbyterian Church Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct Policy defines individual responsibilities as pastors, officers, employees, or volunteers to meet the expectations of Gilbert Presbyterian Church (GPC) with respect to behavior or conduct in the service of the ministries of the church, especially those which serve children under the age of 18 and “vulnerable adults.”

Each person subject to this Code shall:

1. Act as a team member in fulfilling ministry objectives.
2. Treat children and vulnerable adults with respect and fairly without regard to race, age, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.
3. Practice those behaviors we regard as necessary and positive and refrain from those behaviors which have been defined as prohibited.

The following behaviors are prohibited at all times:

1. Displaying affection in private settings.
2. Using profanity or telling inappropriate jokes
3. Discussing sexual encounters or personal problems.
4. Dating or becoming romantically involved with children or vulnerable adults.
5. Using or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on church property or at church functions.
6. Possessing or viewing sexually oriented materials on church property.
7. Staring at or using suggestive language that makes a person feel uncomfortable.
8. Engaging in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication.
9. Abusing people in any way including (but not limited to) the following:
 - Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restrain
 - Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, curse
 - Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually oriented conversations
 - Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly
 - Neglect
 - Permit children to engage in the following: hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, games of Truth or Dare, ridicule, humiliation, sexual activity.
 - Manipulating or exploiting a person in any way.

Working or meeting one-on-one in private settings with children or vulnerable adults is strongly discouraged. See guidelines on page 4.

Each pastor or statutory “mandatory reporter” shall report:

1. Concerns or complaints about other employees and volunteers, other adults, or children, to the pastor or a member of Session.

2. Allegations or incidents of suspected abuse to the designated law enforcement or child welfare authority.

Each pastor, employee, officer, or volunteer worker of GPC shall conduct him/herself in a manner that serves two purposes:

1. To protect children and “vulnerable adults” from abuse or grooming for abuse elsewhere: and
2. To protect/prevent church staff from engaging in patterns of behavior that may be construed as abusive or predatory. While a single infraction of guidelines may not constitute abuse, a pattern of repeated violations will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from their position.

Approval and Affection

In providing approval or affection, the following guidelines apply:

Appropriate Physical Interactions *

- Side hugs
- Group hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- High fives
- Pats on the head when age-appropriate
- Touching hands, shoulders, and arms
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands with young children in escorting situations

*These may be inappropriate if unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer

Inappropriate Physical Interactions

- Kisses on lips or cheeks
- Showing affection in isolated area
- Wrestling
- Tickling— prolonged or unwanted
- Any type of massage given by or to a child
- Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer
- Suggestive comments relating to physique or body development
- Touching bottom, chest, or genitals

Verbal Interactions

The manner of speaking with children establishes respect. The following guidelines apply:

Appropriate Verbal Interactions

- Verbal praise
- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes
- Encouragement

Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

- Name-calling
- Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving children in personal problems or issues
- Secrets
- Cursing
- Off-color or sexual jokes
- Shaming
- Belittling
- Derogatory remarks
- Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate children
- Derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family
- Having secrets with children

Out-of-Program (Off-Site) Contact

GPC strongly recommends that pastors, employees, officers, or volunteers observe the following forms of outside contact as appropriate and inappropriate:

Appropriate Outside Contact

- Taking groups of children on an outing
- Attending sporting events with groups of children
- Attending functions at a child's home, with parents present

Inappropriate Outside Contact

- Taking one child on an outing without the parents' written permission
- Visiting one child in the child's home, without a parent present
- Entertaining one child in the home of a church employee or volunteer
- A lone child spending the night with a church employee or volunteer

In addition, when outside contact is planned or occurs, the following steps are to be taken:

- When deemed necessary, a supervisor shall review for employee and volunteers what types of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate (above)
- A supervisor shall assure that the employee or volunteer has the parents' written and/or verbal permission to engage in outside contact with the child.

Because most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a child, private one-on-one meetings with a child are prohibited unless approved in advance by Pastor or Chair, Christian Education Committee. When so permitted, the following guidelines shall apply:

One-on-One Interaction Standards:

- When meeting one-on-one with a child, always do so in a public place in full view of others.
- Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high fives, and handshakes.

- If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by.
- Inform other employees and volunteers that you are alone with a child if time permits, and ask them to randomly drop in. (Ask to be supervised.)
- Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.

To the extent any of these guidelines may appear to be in conflict, the spirit of them is that one shall seek to be under the supervision of others while meeting privately with a child.

PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORKING CODE OF CONDUCT

All electronic communication between a child/youth and an employee or volunteer representing GPC should be transparent, appropriate, and accessible.

Transparent: All electronic communication between children/youth and employees/volunteers of GPC should be transparent. Communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo, and expectations.

Appropriate: All electronic communication between children/youth and an employee/volunteers of GPC should be conducted appropriately as a representative of the church. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model values consistent with the Christian faith.

Accessible: All electronic communication between children/youth and employees/volunteers of GPC should be considered a matter of record. Whenever possible, include another employee/volunteer or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

If communication meets these three criteria, then it is likely the message will satisfy the personal social networking code of conduct as discussed previously.

In order to facilitate a healthy and effective use of social media, GPC will:

- Provide children and their parents, and GPC staff and volunteers with this Social Networking Code of Conduct.
- Encourage parents to play a role in monitoring their children's interactions with employees and volunteers.
- Continuously remind children how to interact appropriately through social networking sites.

Prohibited Acts

The following acts are prohibited during any congregational activity for children and youth. Additional information about identifying child abuse and neglect is attached as *Appendix G*.

- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct toward a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child/youth/vulnerable adult
- Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child/youth/vulnerable adult
- Physical neglect of a child or youth, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to congregational activities. Adequate supervision means the type of supervision a reasonable person would provide in the same or similar situation.
- Causing mental or emotional injury to a child/youth/vulnerable adult
- Possessing or accessing obscene or pornographic materials at any congregational activity
- Possessing illegal drugs or being under the influence of any illegal drugs
- Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while participating in any congregational activity.
- Any kind of verbal remarks with sexual connotations overtones, or innuendo directed to or about a child/youth/vulnerable adult.
- Carrying any type of weapon without church approval

Compliance and Training

It is the responsibility of each volunteer and employee to comply with these policies and procedures. Every employee and key leader/program volunteer who work with children and youth will be provided with a copy of the Safe Church policy at the beginning of their tenure and training highlighting key components will be provided by the pastor and/or representative of the Christian Education committee. Questions/concerns/clarifications will be addressed by the pastor and/or representatives of the Christian Education committee. There shall be periodic training/review of policy for all staff/volunteers thereafter, when significant changes/additions are made to the policy, or as deemed appropriate by the Christian Education committee— in group and/or in one-on-one situations. Volunteers who have direct contact with children/youth will be required to review the policy annually, and sign documentation attesting to such review. The Safe Church policy will be presented at new members' classes and conveyed to the parents and families of the church through various means of communication.

I agree to comply with all Code of Conduct standards described above relating to children/youth/vulnerable adults as defined above, If requested to do so, I will cooperate with any investigation of a possible violation of church policies and rules by providing complete and truthful information in an oral and/or written statement.

Signature

Date

The burden of compliance with these policies and procedures is placed on each volunteer and employee. The church should provide training and monitor compliance.