

Child Protection Policy

New Hope Presbyterian Church

The Biblical Foundation

- ◇ *Our God is a God of light. We are called to walk in his ways as his children of light.*

John 12:35–36, “So Jesus said to them, ‘The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.’”

I John 1:5, “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

Ephesians 5:8–9, “For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true).”

- ◇ *Children are special in God’s sight. They are a precious gift, made in God’s own image. Jesus rebuked his disciples in righteous anger when they tried to prevent children from coming to him. Jesus welcomes children and gives them a central place in his kingdom.*

Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Psalms 127:3, “Behold, children are a heritage from the *Lord*, the fruit of the womb a reward.”

Mark 10:13–14, “And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.’”

- ◇ *God hears the prayers of children who are abused. Some of Jesus’ harshest words were reserved for those who would cause a child to stumble.*

Exodus 22:21–24, “You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.”

Psalms 10:17–18, “O *Lord*, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.”

Matthew 18:5–6, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would

Faithful Protection

be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

- ◇ *Children are valued by God, but also vulnerable spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, and morally. God hates the oppression of the vulnerable. God recognizes the temptation for the powerful to use their power for the exploitation of the weak and condemns anyone who would thus abuse their power.*

Deuteronomy 10:17–19, “For the *Lord* your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.”

Psalms 9:9, “The *Lord* is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.”

Luke 4:18–19, “The Spirit of the *Lord* is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the *Lord*’s favor.”

- ◇ *As his redeemed image bearers, his children of light, God calls us to speak up and use our power for the protection of the vulnerable. When we intervene on behalf of the vulnerable we are reflecting the moral beauty of our God. When we remain silent, or we abuse power by harming the vulnerable, we are denying the glorious moral purity of God. This is why the abuse of power is so personal to God.*

Leviticus 19:13–15, “You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the *Lord*. You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”

Job 29:11–17, “When the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it approved, because I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous and made him drop his prey from his teeth.”

Proverbs 31:8–9, “Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Ecclesiastes 4:1, “Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to

comfort them.”

Isaiah 1:16–17, “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”

James 1:27 “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

Core Beliefs

Promote, Protect, Prevent and Respond

- We believe in **promoting** healthy relationships between adults and children.
- We believe that **protecting** children is an adult’s responsibility.
- We believe in **preventing and responding** to abuse with training and accountability.

Guiding Principles

The following principles guide our child protection plan. They flow from the biblical foundation and our core beliefs:

An intergenerational church is God’s covenant plan: New Hope Presbyterian Church highly values the role that loving, godly adults have in discipling and nurturing children and how children bless adults in the church. Our congregation vows, at a covenant child’s baptism, to “undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of this child.” (PCA BCO 56-5)

Protecting children honors Christ: Jesus holds New Hope Presbyterian Church accountable for protecting our children, and calls us to follow his lead in loving children. Good policies, procedures, systems and structures facilitate mutual accountability as we submit to Christ.

We must proactively work to protect children: Preventing and responding to child abuse takes a heavy investment of time, money and resources. However, the spiritual, emotional, physical and financial toll of child abuse is far greater if passively allowed.

Up-to-date child protection is in everyone’s best interest: Churches that practice good child protection procedures protect children as well as adults who serve children because training and accountability will build trust among parents, volunteers and church staff.

Child protection requires humility: As Christians, we confess our spiritual brokenness and sin, and therefore, we must all humbly submit to boundaries established around children. Moreover, those who have committed child sexual abuse and other crimes against children will not be allowed to serve with children.

The church is a place for sinners: We want to be a church that is safe for hurting, broken people to come and find grace, hope and healing. Prioritizing child protection

Faithful Protection

creates an environment of humility and accountability where such healing can take place. **First-rate protection:** because any setting where children are present may be sought out by those wishing to harm them, we aspire to be a place where parents walk in and sense that their children will be loved and safe. We also want to conform to the most up-to-date laws and research about child abuse and abuse prevention. In this way, New Hope Presbyterian Church can be known as the safest place in our city for children.

Protecting every child: New Hope Presbyterian Church's child protection plan applies to any child, eighteen and under, at any New Hope Presbyterian Church activity.

Key Commitments

- ◇ We have a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse.
- ◇ We report child sexual abuse to the civil authorities.
- ◇ All employees and volunteers will be screened according to the Child Protection Procedures of New Hope Presbyterian Church.
- ◇ We do not employ anyone who has been convicted of or confessed to sexually abusing a child.
- ◇ We do not allow anyone to volunteer who has been convicted of or confessed to sexually abusing a child.
- ◇ Any employee or volunteer accused of sexually abusing a child will be immediately suspended from serving children and we will do our best to ensure they have no access to children in our church or in the community until we have clarity on the situation.
- ◇ Any employee or volunteer who does not abide by or help guard our child protection procedures and our code of conduct will not be allowed to work with children or youth.

Child Protection Procedures

New Hope Presbyterian Church

Last Updated: 10/19/2019

Introduction

Children have a special place as members of God’s covenant family (Genesis 17:7). They are a precious gift, made in God’s own image (Psalm 127:3; Genesis 1:27). Jesus commanded his disciples to “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). Jesus places children at the center of his kingdom. At the same time, Jesus knows that children occupy a vulnerable place in the world. Jesus reserved some of his harshest words for those who would harm or belittle children saying, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:5–6). God charges his people to care for and protect the most vulnerable members because he is the God of the vulnerable and the oppressed (Deuteronomy 10:17–19; Psalm 9:9; Psalm 10:17–18; Leviticus 19:13–15; Job 29:11–17).

We are committed to promoting a safe environment for all children at New Hope Presbyterian Church. Working toward this goal, we believe in promoting healthy relationships between adults and children. We will not tolerate any form of abusive behavior—verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual. The responsibility for promoting a safe environment for the protection of children rests on all adults at New Hope Presbyterian Church.

We have committed to the following procedures as we seek to prevent and respond to abuse with sound training and appropriate accountability.

Definitions

Child—Any person under the age of 18 years old or any person whose mental capacity is that of a minor.

Adult—Any person at least 18 years of age.

Student Volunteer—Any person, under the age of 18, who supervises children at a church-sponsored activity or program.

Employee—Any adult paid for their work at New Hope Presbyterian Church.

Child Abuse—Any willful act, omission, or threatened act that results in any physical, mental or sexual injury or harm.

Child Sexual Abuse—Any sexual act between an adult and a child, or between two children, when one exerts power over the other; forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act; sexual abuse also includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or internet.

Emotional Abuse—When a child is not nurtured or provided with love and

Faithful Protection

security, but instead endures an environment of constant criticism, belittling, persistent threatening, or bullying.

Mandated Reporter—Any person who is required by law to report when they have a reason to believe child abuse has occurred; however, in keeping with biblical principles, for the sake of vulnerable children who cannot protect themselves, all adults are morally obligated to report abuse.

Screening and Eligibility for Service

1. All adults who work with children will submit the necessary information for a national, criminal background check before being allowed access to children. This information must be updated by all adults who work with children every three years. Any adult who has been convicted of child abuse or other violent crimes will not be eligible for employment at New Hope Presbyterian Church or service as a volunteer within New Hope Presbyterian Church's nursery, children's and student ministries.
2. All adults and student volunteers who work with children will give three non-related, personal references who can answer questions about how said staff or volunteer interacts with children. A designated person shall check all references.
3. All adults and student volunteers who work with children will interview with the Session.
4. All adults and student volunteers who work with children must be members of New Hope Presbyterian Church, having had regular fellowship with New Hope Presbyterian Church for at least six months immediately prior to service (with exceptions made for paid staff).
5. New Hope Presbyterian's Session will make the final interpretation and determination of eligibility for service for each candidate.

Training

1. Before supervising children in any capacity, all adults must attend *Stewards of Children*, child sexual abuse prevention training. All adults who work with children must attend *Stewards of Children* again, after three years of service.
2. Before supervising children in any capacity, adults and student volunteers must read and agree to follow the child protection plan of New Hope Presbyterian Church. Every year, all adults and student volunteers who work with children must read and agree to our child protection plan.

Reporting

God has ordained civil authorities to be his servant. As God's servant, he gives civil authorities the power of the sword to punish those who do evil. God calls us to submit to these authorities as they carry out their God-ordained role to punish evil (Romans 13:1–7; I Peter 2:13–14). A key aspect of our submission to the God-ordained civil authorities is to report the crime of child abuse. Child abuse is not only a sin, but a felony. Although New York state's mandated reporting laws do not include clergy or church-workers specifically, we have chosen to mandate reporting of any suspected abuse. For a list of

mandated reporters in our state, please visit <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/Pub1159.pdf>

All adults at New Hope Presbyterian Church are encouraged by our leadership to report child abuse in the following circumstances:

1. *Witness*—you witness or discover an act of abuse. In this situation you must demonstrate courage. You must intervene and move the child to a safe place and call the authorities immediately. Then, contact the senior pastor and complete our “Knowledge of Suspected Child Abuse” form. The pastor can then ensure the perpetrator has no further access to children at the church and can initiate appropriate pastoral care for all parties.
2. *Disclosure*—a child tells you of abuse they experienced. In this situation, remain calm and keep the child talking with open-ended questions rather than leading questions (for example, “What happened next? Can you tell me more?”) as long as the child feels comfortable. When the child has finished the disclosure, tell the child you believe them, it is not their fault, and you are going to help them. After the initial disclosure, do not try to conduct a lengthy interview, but as soon as is practical, while being sensitive to the child, call the authorities. Then, contact the senior pastor and complete our “Knowledge of Suspected Child Abuse” form.

Special Note: When there is a disclosure of abuse, no one, not even the parents or the pastor ought to conduct another interview of the child or conduct an internal investigation. The authorities or child advocacy center will have someone who is trained to conduct a child forensic interview. The more interviews the child has, the harder it is on the child and on those tasked with investigating and potentially prosecuting the crime.

3. *Reasonable Cause*—you have reasonable cause that child abuse has occurred. Reasonable cause does not require absolute proof. Instead, reasonable cause means one or more signs of child abuse are present. After reporting the reasonable cause, then contact the senior pastor and complete our “Knowledge of Suspected Child Abuse” form.

Sometimes there are no visible signs of child sexual abuse, but common signs include:

- A. Bleeding, bruising, pain or other signs of *trauma* around the genitalia (please note when changing a diaper this is very different from a diaper rash)
- B. Sexually transmitted disease in a child
- C. Sexual language and behavior that are not age-appropriate (including promiscuous behavior)
- D. Repeated boundary violations by an adult or student volunteer (e.g. you find an adult or student volunteer isolated with a child or pushing the limits of inappropriate touch, even after being warned not to do so)
- E. Emotional and behavioral signs such as withdrawal, fear, depression, anger or swings in behavior and mood

Faithful Protection

F. Difficulty sitting or walking without pain

Incident Response

When a report is made about suspected child abuse, all employees and volunteers of New Hope Presbyterian Church are encouraged to cooperate fully with any legal investigation.

After contacting the authorities, all employees and volunteers at New Hope Presbyterian Church should document their actions and knowledge with the “Knowledge of Suspected Child Abuse” form and turn the form into the church office in a sealed envelope.

Any adults who report suspected child abuse to the authorities should then contact New Hope Presbyterian Church’s senior pastor. The senior pastor will then initiate pastoral care for all parties and any disciplinary measures that may need to be taken. The senior pastor will also inform the clerk of the session, the church’s legal representative, and the church’s insurance company. Any media inquiries should be directed to the senior pastor. In the event that the senior pastor is personally involved in the incident, either as the accused or family of the victim, the associate pastor or New Hope Presbyterian Church’s Session will fulfill these duties.

After all the necessary reports have been made, New Hope Presbyterian Church encourages everyone involved in the incident to use biblical wisdom when speaking about it. While New Hope Presbyterian Church does not require a strict confidentiality, we would ask anyone who reports to use their knowledge of the incident for a godly purpose, speaking only of the incident in times and places that will help further protect children, aid investigators, or bring healing to all parties involved.

Internal Investigations

When suspected abuse is reported to the civil authorities and the suspected abuse occurred on New Hope Presbyterian Church’s property or ministry event, New Hope Presbyterian Church’s child protection committee will perform an internal investigation of the incident. Without interfering with the civil authorities’ investigation, the child protection committee’s investigation will seek to discover the following:

1. Did adults and volunteers follow all of New Hope Presbyterian Church’s child protection policies?
2. If not, what caused the failure to follow the policy?
3. Is there an area of our child protection policies that should be altered so that such an incident will be less likely in the future?

If a report of child sexual abuse has been made, and the civil authorities do not file charges, the child protection committee shall conduct its own investigation in cooperation with the session to determine whether the person(s) involved shall be allowed to continue working with children. Just because civil authorities do not have enough evidence to file charges, this does not mean the person is exonerated completely or is well-suited to work with children. Any recommendations should be made to the session for their final approval. Any powers of church discipline shall remain with the session; however, information and recommendations from the child protection committee will be given due consideration by the session.

Boundary Violations

New Hope Presbyterian Church takes any violations of our child protection plan very seriously. Abusers are rarely caught in the act of harming a child, but they're often seen breaking the rules and crossing boundaries. Every incident of boundary and rule violation does not necessarily signal that child abuse has occurred. However, every incident of boundary violation requires responsible action to ensure children's safety.

Adults and student volunteers should intervene when they see anyone breaking the child protection plan, ensure all children are safe, and remind the violator of appropriate behavior around children. Adults and student volunteers should also fill out a "Boundary Violation Report" in the following circumstances: when an adult or student volunteer is found in an isolated area with a child or when an adult or student volunteer observes a repeated boundary violation by the same person. (Please note that any abuse should be stopped and then immediately reported. This only applies to boundary violations.)

Boundary violations that require intervention include but are not limited to:

- If an adult or student volunteer is in an isolated area with a child, then remind them that this is unsafe and against the church's child protection plan. Bring the child out of the isolated area and return the child to his or her parents and inform them of the situation. Also fill out a "Boundary Violation Report."
- If an adult or student volunteer is changing a child's diaper on the floor, then remind them to change a child's diaper only in the designated area.
- If an adult or student volunteer raises their voice at a child, then direct them in how to use positive reinforcement with children.
- If an adult or student volunteer tells a joke with sexual content, then ask them not to use sexual humor around children.
- If an adult or student volunteer wants to give a child a hug and the child seems uncomfortable (even in a visible area), then point out that the child seems uncomfortable and remind them that physical affection should never be forced.

Regular Evaluation of our Procedures and Code of Conduct

New Hope Presbyterian Church's child protection committee will meet quarterly to evaluate and update the child protection procedures and code of conduct. Recommended updates will be presented to the session for approval.

Code of Conduct

New Hope Presbyterian Church

Last Updated: 10/19/2019

Statement of Purpose

Our goal is to protect the precious little ones that Jesus welcomes with open arms (Mark 10:14). Children are vulnerable and need protection. As adults it is our task to ensure that children are safe by abiding by the following code of conduct.

Accountability

When it comes to protecting children, we all ought to be accountable to one another for our actions. It is our individual and collective choices that will determine whether our church is a safe environment for children. We honor the Lord when we hold each other accountable for the purpose of protecting children made in his image. Whenever children are present, two unrelated adults must be present to ensure accountability. Every ministry activity ought to be open and interruptible. All adults, whether an employee or volunteer, and all student volunteers are subject to this code of conduct.

Visibility

As much as possible, ministry with children and youth ought to occur in highly visible areas. Observability is a key factor in minimizing the risk of abuse. This means utilizing open spaces, classrooms with big windows, and avoiding isolated areas.

Restricting One Adult-One Child Situations

Most abuse happens in one adult-one child situations. We strive to eliminate all of these situations because they are such high risk. This does not mean there cannot be any private conversation between an adult and a child. However, these conversations need to take place in an open and observable area. All activities involving children must have at least two adults supervising at all times. For our purposes, any related adults shall count as one adult.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Touch

By God's design, appropriate touch is an important way for us to understand that we are loved. Appropriate touch is observable by other adults. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors. Touch should be welcomed by the child. Any resistance by the child should be immediately respected. Because healthy, caring touch is valuable to children but unhealthy touch is abusive, the following guidelines apply:

- Touch shall be open rather than secretive.

- Touch should show care for the child rather than meet a need in the adult.
- Touch should be age- and developmentally appropriate.
- Touch should normally be initiated by the child rather than the adult.
- Touch should always communicate respect for the child.
- Touch should immediately cease if the child is in any way uncomfortable.
- Adults and other youth or children should not hit, slap, pinch, push, hold against their will, or otherwise assault children.

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within the guidelines above:

- Verbal praise
- Side hugs and shoulder to shoulder hugs
- High fives and fist bumps
- Pats on the shoulder, back, or head (when culturally appropriate)

For smaller children, the following are generally appropriate with other adults around and within the guidelines above:

- Touching hands, shoulders, and arms
- Hugs
- Holding them when others are present

The following behaviors between employees or volunteers and children are inappropriate, or they may at least be perceived as inappropriate. Please refrain from:

- Touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs
- Full body hugs
- Kissing
- Tickling
- Showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child
- Sleeping in bed with a child
- Inappropriate comments that relate to physique or body development
- Flirtatious or seductive looks
- Showing sexually suggestive content or playing sexually suggestive games
- Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child
- Any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual in nature

Adults shall monitor each other, youth, and older children in the area of physical contact, helping each other follow these guidelines and pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Speech

Words are a wonderful way to build one another up. Words can give encouragement and impart grace to the hearer (Ephesians 4:29). We must speak words that give life, such as praise, positive reinforcement, and speaking the truth in love. At the same time we must avoid words that harm. We will all commit to refrain from inappropriate verbal

interaction such as: shaming, belittling, name calling, using harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate a child, cursing, or making derogatory remarks about a child. Inappropriate verbal interaction also includes telling off-color or sexual jokes, making sexually suggestive comments, telling inappropriate secrets, or inappropriately discussing sexual encounters or desires with children. Adults shall avoid favoring or showing preferential treatment to particular children or youth.

Discipline

Discipline ought to be corrective and not punitive. We do not permit anyone other than a parent to administer corporal punishment to a child. Furthermore, discipline should never include yelling, shaming, or in any way belittling a child. If there is a serious incident that requires discipline, it is always wise to involve the parent.

Technology

Any employee or volunteer working with children or youth is responsible to ensure that any technology is used appropriately. We must monitor any use of phones, the internet, TV, and movies when children are in our care. Technology can quickly be turned from a proper use into something that is used for exploitation. All pornography and any other sexually explicit or suggestive content is strictly prohibited. Any bullying, online or otherwise, will not be tolerated and should be reported to parents and appropriate staff. Adults should refrain from developing a relationship with a child or youth primarily over electronic media (text, IM, etc.), since this is not open and observable. Any sexual conversation between an adult and a child over electronic media is abusive and is strictly prohibited.

Rules Specific to Bathroom Use

No adult should take a child to the bathroom alone. Elementary children should be sent to the bathroom in groups of at least two or three. If a child is potty training, an adult should ensure the bathroom is safe before allowing such a small child to enter alone. Encourage the child to go on their own. If the child needs assistance, involve another adult to ensure there is no one adult-one child situation. When assisting, allow for accountability while respecting the privacy of the child as much as possible.

Rules Specific to the Nursery

Small children are extremely vulnerable. We must ensure there is good visibility and adequate staff and volunteers to supervise the nursery. We encourage women to change diapers unless the man is the father of the child. When changing diapers, inform another nursery worker, and change the diaper quickly and with respect for the child. Diapers should only be changed in designated areas where we can maintain the boundaries of openness and observability.

Supervision

Regular supervision helps reduce risk. Every activity is interruptible and we are all accountable to one another. Program supervisors shall frequently and randomly stop in to observe the nursery, classrooms, and other areas where children and adults are together.

Parental Involvement

Parents are responsible for knowing where their children are at all times. We encourage parents to drop by unannounced to observe any activity in which their child is participating. Along with other adults, parents have a key role to play in keeping their children safe. The involvement of watchful parents, who make unannounced visits, leads to a safer environment for all children. Parents are encouraged to be educated in our procedures and code of conduct and help with their enforcement.

Reporting Boundary Violations

For the safety of all children in our care, we are all responsible to help ensure the boundaries set forth in this code of conduct are followed. The Bible commends those who have a teachable spirit and are open to correction (Proverbs 9:8; 13:18). Therefore, we must all pledge to remind each other if a boundary is being crossed. Every boundary violation requires responsible action from adults. Our expectation is that you will intervene when a boundary is crossed. Working with children is a huge privilege and responsibility because our children are so valuable. *Those who are unwilling to guard proper boundaries cannot work with our children.* When a boundary is crossed, kindly but firmly remind the person of the boundary and make sure the situation is safe. It might also be appropriate to fill out a *Boundary Violation Report* and submit it to the church office. All reports will be kept confidential. Cases where it would be appropriate would include but not be limited to: repeat boundary violations, an attitude of resistance to boundaries, and an especially dangerous boundary violation (such as an adult being all alone with a child in an isolated area). These can be difficult decisions, but you must follow your conscience and our procedures. If something is not right it is better to speak to someone about it. Abusers are rarely caught in the act of abuse, but they are often caught crossing boundaries. We must see the signs and intervene.

Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

When anyone has reason to suspect or has knowledge of child abuse within the scope of the church's ministry, he or she must report it to the civil authorities and inform the senior pastor. If the senior pastor is involved in the incident, report to another pastor or the clerk of session. You will then need to fill out a Knowledge of Suspected Abuse form and submit it to the church office in a sealed envelope.

VII. Recommended Resources

Understanding and Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

- ◇ “Sexual Abuse in Christian Organizations” by Dr. Diane Langberg (available at www.netgrace.org/resources/)
- ◇ *Protecting Children from Abuse in the Church: Steps to Prevent and Respond* by Basyle Tchividjian (New Growth Press, 2013)
- ◇ “Suffer the Children: Developing Effective Church Policies on Child Maltreatment” by Victor I. Vieth (available at www.netgrace.org/resources/)
- ◇ *This Little Light: Beyond a Baptist Preacher Predator and His Gang* by Christa Brown (Foremost Press, 2009)
- ◇ *On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church* by Deepak Reju (Forthcoming, New Growth Press, 2014).
- ◇ *Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, & Other Sex Offenders: Who They Are, How They Operate, and How We Can Protect Ourselves and Our Children* by Anna Salter (Basic Books, 2003)
- ◇ “Christians and the struggle to report child abuse” by Basyle Tchividjian (available at www.boz.religionnews.com/)
- ◇ “Sex offenders in the church: From apathy to action” by Lynette Frantzen (available at www.ministrymagazine.org)
- ◇ “The High Cost of Negligence” by Jamie Dean (available at www.worldmag.com)
- ◇ “Fear at Fanda” by Jamie Dean (available at www.worldmag.com)
- ◇ “What Would Walther Do? Applying Law & Gospel to Victims and Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse” by Victor I. Vieth (available at www.netgrace.org)
- ◇ “Key Questions about Child Sexual Abuse in the Church” by Mike Sloan (available at www.byfaithonline.com)

Ministry to Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse

- ◇ *On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Hope for Survivors of Sexual Abuse* by Diane Langberg (Tyndale House, 1999)
- ◇ *Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse* by Diane Langberg (Xulon Press, 2003)
- ◇ *Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault* by Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb (Crossway Books, 2011)
- ◇ “The Spiritual Impact of Abuse” by Diane Langberg (available at www.net-grace.org/resources/)
- ◇ *The Long Journey Home: Understanding & Ministering to the Sexually Abused: A Collaborative Address from Psychology, Theology, and Pastoral Care* edited by Andrew J. Schmutzer (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011)
- ◇ *Bringing Christ to Abused Women: Learning to See and Respond* by Diane

Langberg (New Growth Press, 2013)

Recommended Organizations for Resources, Training, and Consultation

- ◇ Adults Protecting Children—www.adultsprotectingchildren.org
- ◇ Darkness to Light—www.darkness2light.org
- ◇ G.R.A.C.E. (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment)—www.netgrace.org
- ◇ Ministry Safe—www.ministrysafe.org
- ◇ Boz Tchividjian’s Blog on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: Rhymes with Religion—www.boz.religionnews.com

Recommended Organizations for Counseling and Recovery

- ◇ Diane Langberg and Associates—www.dianelangberg.com
- ◇ Together We Heal—www.together-we-heal.org
- ◇ Committed to Freedom, Abuse Recovery Solutions—www.committedtofreedom.org
- ◇ American Association of Christian Counselors—www.aacc.net

VIII. Addendum: Parents Preventing Abuse

As parents, one of our worst nightmares is someone harming our children. There is no sure-fire way to abuse-proof our children, and children can be abused whether they come from loving families or not. While some things are out of our control, many are within our control. Those things that are within our control, when implemented well, can reduce the risk of our children being abused or set them up for healing if they are abused.

Become Your Child's Advocate

The best way parents protect their children is to advocate for safe environments. Ask good questions about any person or any organization that has oversight of your children. When we sign our children up for an activity such as church nursery, soccer, music lessons, or tutoring, we should ask how the organization screens their employees. Do they perform background checks, interviews, and reference checks? Ask if they have a child protection plan. Have their employees been trained in abuse prevention? Do all their employees know and abide by the child protection plan? Ask if parents can drop in and observe without an appointment.

Then, drop in unannounced. Look around at the facilities where your children will be. Are there isolated places? Is it visible and interruptible? Are people in and out of the facility who should not be there? It may feel awkward to ask all these questions and think through these scenarios, but it is worth the effort. Follow your gut instinct and if something about the situation feels off, follow up on that instinct until you feel satisfied that your child is safe. If your questions are never satisfied, do not allow your child to participate.

When leaving children with a nanny or babysitter, it is particularly important to screen caregivers and lay boundaries for them because the risk to children is greater in a private home which is isolated from other adults. Asking for references, even for babysitters who only work occasionally, is a must. If the caregiver is over eighteen, run a background check. We also give our caregivers explicit instructions about our children. By laying down a few boundaries, parents send a signal that they are vigilant and if the boundaries are broken, we will notice. Here is an example of what I (Beth) go over with anyone who cares for my children:

1. We expect open and honest communication between you, the kids and us. That means...
 - a. Do not hesitate to call us if you have a question about anything.
 - b. We do not keep secrets.
2. While we are gone and the children are awake, no one should be on the internet, and you and the children may only watch designated videos. Do not show our children any videos or pictures on your phone without our permission.
3. Do not take or post pictures or video of our children on the internet or post

- that you are babysitting for us tonight.
4. No one else should be in our home without our approval.
 5. We play with open doors. If two people are in a room together, the door needs to be open.
 6. We expect our children to treat you respectfully and for you to treat them respectfully as well. Our children understand the difference between good touch and bad touch, respectful language and disrespectful language.
 7. Do not spank our children or use any form of physical punishment. Do not withhold from them, shame them or yell at them.
 8. Our children should be fully clothed during your time together. If they need help in the bathroom/with a diaper change, help them quickly and with as little invasion to their privacy as possible. Do not bathe our children.
 9. We will be home at _____ but we occasionally drop by to see how things are going.

Body Awareness

One of the best gifts parents can give their children is accurate information about their bodies. From the time they are born, parents shape the way children talk and think about their bodies. Because God created our bodies and declared them good, there is nothing inherently shameful about them. Therefore, when parents teach their baby about her nose, they should also teach her about her vagina.

Every body part has a proper name, and we should teach our children proper names for their anatomy. A penis is a penis. A vagina is a vagina. Then, as children grow, they will naturally be curious about their bodies and sexuality. It is vital that parents answer their questions directly with as much detail as is age appropriate. A helpful guide for parenting to prevent abuse at each stage of your child's development can be found at [The Mama Bear Effect](#). We can teach our children about their bodies, and the more accurate information they have, the better.

Likewise, children from a young age can understand what private parts are and distinguish between good touch and bad touch. Young children can understand the concept that their body is their own, and that they can say no to any touch that they do not want. Parents should also tell children explicitly and regularly that if someone touches them in their private parts or in any other way that they do not like, they need to tell mommy or daddy. We should tell our children that we will believe them if they tell us and we won't be upset with them even if the person who used bad touch is someone mommy or daddy know and like.

Prepare them that someone who touches them inappropriately might tell them to keep it secret, or that mommy won't love you anymore if you tell, or that they will hurt you or mommy if you tell. Give your children some "What if..." scenarios so they are prepared. Tell them you love them so much that they need to tell you no matter what the person says because God gave you the important job of keeping them safe. Tell them how valuable they are to God and to you. At the same time, it is necessary to tell our children not to touch anyone else's private parts or force anyone to touch theirs.

These honest conversations will bear fruit for years to come in your relationship with

Faithful Protection

your child. At an early age, you are reinforcing God's wisdom for sexuality and relationships. You are also building trust by handling intimate issues well. You are opening the lines of communication for any type of difficult issue. You are establishing yourself as the go-to person on sexuality in a cultural sea of sexual sin and confusion. As your child matures, the awkwardness will lessen because you have always been able to have frank conversation about appropriate boundaries. All of these conversations will help you connect and understand your child's heart. You will be able to understand better who they are and where they are going. This close connection will allow you to be better tuned-in to their heart so you can notice if something is off, whether or not it is abuse.

Child Protection Consent Form

New Hope Presbyterian Church

I acknowledge that I have received and read a copy of _____ Church's Child Protection Policy, Child Protection Procedures, and Code of Conduct.

I understand these documents and agree to abide by them.

Furthermore, I agree to hold others accountable to follow them.

Signature

Date

Print Name

Personal Interview Record

Date: _____

Interviewee: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interview questions should include but not be limited to:

Tell us about how you become a Christian?

What is your relationship like with God right now?

What motivates you when you think about working with children?

In what capacities have you worked with children before?

Where do you see your strengths and weaknesses in working with children?

Have you read our child protection documents? What do you think about them? Are you willing to submit to their requirements and help others follow them?

If you discovered a child alone with another adult in an isolated area, what would you do?

If you overheard another adult telling a sexual joke what would you do?

Additional Comments (use the back if needed):

Reference Request

Date: _____

Adult or student volunteer name: _____

Please list three personal references that we may contact (no relatives please).

Reference #1

Name: _____

Email address: _____

Street Address: _____

City, state, zip: _____

Phone: _____

Relationship to reference: _____

Reference #2

Name: _____

Email address: _____

Street Address: _____

City, state, zip: _____

Phone: _____

Relationship to reference: _____

Reference #3

Name: _____

Email address: _____

Street Address: _____

City, state, zip: _____

Phone: _____

Relationship to reference: _____

Record of Reference Check

Reference record for (adult or student volunteer's name): _____

References checked by: _____

Reference #1:

Reference Name: _____

Date: _____

Method of communication:

Reference questions should include but not be limited to:

What is your relationship with _____?

How long have you known _____?

In what capacity have you seen _____ working with children (or students)?

How would you describe _____'s ability to relate to children (or students)?

What do you think _____'s strength are in working with children?

What are areas where _____ could improve as he/she interacts with children?

When _____ interacted with children, did he/she know and respect the boundaries (or policies) for your organization (family, etc.) around children? If not, please explain.

Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect _____'s ability to work with children?

Would you recommend that _____ work with children in our organization?

Additional Questions/Comments:

Reference #2:

Reference Name: _____

Date: _____

Method of communication:

Reference questions should include but not be limited to:

What is your relationship with _____?

How long have you known _____?

In what capacity have you seen _____ working with children (or students)?

Faithful Protection

How would you describe _____'s ability to relate to children (or students)?

What do you think _____'s strength are in working with children?

What are areas where _____ could improve as he/she interacts with children?

When _____ interacted with children, did he/she know and respect the boundaries (or policies) for your organization (family, etc.) around children? If not, please explain.

Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect _____'s ability to work with children?

Would you recommend that _____ work with children in our organization?

Additional Questions/Comments:

Reference #3:

Reference Name: _____

Date: _____

Method of communication:

VI. Sample Child Protection

Reference questions should include but not be limited to:

What is your relationship with_____?

How long have you known_____?

In what capacity have you seen_____working with children (or students)?

How would you describe_____’s ability to relate to children (or students)?

What do you think_____’s strength are in working with children?

What are areas where_____could improve as he/she interacts with children?

When_____interacted with children, did he/she know and respect the boundaries (or policies) for your organization (family, etc.) around children? If not, please explain.

Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect_____’s ability to work with children?

Would you recommend that_____work with children in our organization?

Additional Questions/Comments:

Knowledge of Suspected Child Abuse

Name of staff or volunteer observing or receiving disclosure of child sexual abuse:

Victim's Name and Age: _____

Date/place of incident: _____

Name of person accused of abuse: _____

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):

Summary of Incident (use the back of this sheet if you need more space):

Date/Time civil authorities were notified: _____

Person who called the civil authorities: _____

Church officers notified (usually Senior Pastor): _____

Date/Time of notification: _____

Date/Time child's parent/guardian was notified: _____

Person who contacted family: _____

Family member contacted: _____

Summary of conversation:

Other action taken (e.g. contacting Child Advocacy Group):

Boundary Violation Report

Any adult or student volunteer who observes any other adult or student volunteer in an isolated area with a child or observes any other adult or student volunteer repeatedly violating boundaries, should use this form to create a record of the incident. Turn this form into the church administrative assistant in a sealed envelope.

Adult or student volunteer involved in the incident: _____

Child/children involved in the incident: _____

Location(s) of boundary violation(s): _____

Date(s) of boundary violation(s): _____

Circumstances of the violation(s). Give as much detail as you can remember (use the back of this sheet if you need more space):

Any actions taken in response to boundary violation(s):

Name: _____

Date: _____