

30 January 2008

Dear parents of FPC children and youth,

Since its adoption in May 2004 by our session, the Child & Youth Protection Policy has been our guide as we have sought to “provide a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and volunteers who participate in the ministries and activities sponsored by the church.” The policy has been received positively by staff and volunteers, many of whom have received training and support.

While the policy seeks to provide guidelines for adults supervising children and youth in official church programs, the Christian Education Committee has become increasingly aware there are times when children are at church but are not participating in a formal program. For example, they may be waiting with a mother or father while a sibling is in choir, doing homework while a parent is in a meeting or playing after worship with friends. In these situations, it remains the parents’ responsibility to supervise their children when they are at church.

We want the church to be a place where children are welcomed and feel at home. However, as a downtown church whose doors are open to many during weekdays and on Sundays, it is unreasonable to assume there are no dangers in our large building. While Jesus told us to “welcome the stranger,” he also told us to “be wise as serpents” and to seek the welfare of those who are most vulnerable.

To promote the safety of our members, the Christian Education Committee seeks to clarify our Child & Youth Protection policy by reminding all parents of the following guidelines:

- When children and youth are at church, but not participating in a formal church program, they are to remain under the supervision and the responsibility of their parents.
- Though not written with parents as the intended audience, the *Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct* provides helpful guidelines about safe supervision. A copy of this code is enclosed, and the entire policy is available on the church’s Web site as well as at the office.

Please sign and return the form. A signed response indicates you are aware of the church’s expectations as well as the Child & Youth Protection policy.

You may respond easily by using the form on the church’s Web site ([www.fpcasheville.org](http://www.fpcasheville.org)). If you prefer, you may return the form below to the reception desk in the Wallace Foyer or mail it to the church office.

We welcome any comments, concerns or questions you may have about this important matter. Thanks for your help and cooperation.

CE Committee

Chairperson, Eve Bennett

Staff members, Nancy McNeill & Michael Poulos

*Approved by the FPC Session January 13, 2008*

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Parent(s) Acknowledgement

I/We have received and read the CE Committee’s letter regarding my/our responsibility as parent(s) to supervise my/our children, as well as the Child and Youth Protection Policy’s *Code of Conduct*.

Name(s)

Date

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## **Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct**

1. FPC-A employees and volunteers may not verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually abuse children.
2. Volunteers and staff will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable and their right to say no.
3. FPC-A employees and volunteers may not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
4. Physical restraint is used only in situations necessary to protect the child, other children, or staff from harm.
5. FPC-A employees and volunteers shall never leave a child unsupervised while participating in a program.
6. Restroom supervision: Employees and volunteers will make sure any restroom used is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing children and youth to use the facilities. Always send children in pairs, and send younger children with an employee or volunteer. The employee or volunteer will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the adult (not being alone with a child). If staff is assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.
7. Only nursery staff, following nursery guidelines, will perform diapering.
8. Employees and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported according to the FPC-A Child and Youth Protection Policy.
9. Employees and volunteers are discouraged from being alone with children at times outside of scheduled program activities.
10. Under no circumstances should employees or volunteers release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized by the parent or guardian.
11. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or being impaired by legally prescribed drugs during working hours or while volunteering is prohibited.
12. Smoking or use of tobacco in the presence of children, youth or parents during working hours or while volunteering is prohibited except in designated areas.
13. Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children or parents is prohibited.

14. Employees and adult volunteers may not be romantically involved with program participants who are younger than 18 years of age.
15. Employees and volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and will attend training sessions on the subject, as instructed by a supervisor.
16. Employees and volunteers are expected to observe the *Two Leader/Open Door Policy* in their interaction with children and youth (see below).
17. All staff members and volunteers are required to report any concerns or suspicions regarding their observations of any adult's interactions with a child. These concerns may be reported to the individual or to his/her supervisor. If the concerns are not alleviated by a change in the individual's behavior, the second report must be made to the direct supervisor, the Youth Pastor or the Children's Ministry Coordinator.

#### Two-Leader/Open Door Policy

In order to avoid situations where an individual employee or volunteer is alone in a room with children, all children's and youth activities should be supervised by two adult leaders. The presence of two leaders is to protect children and youth against situations in which abuse might occur, and to protect leaders against false allegations of abuse or neglect.

In the event that two leaders cannot be present in the room, such that one leader is alone in a room with one or more children or youth, an interior door must be left open. The leader should position himself or herself in the room such that other adults passing in the hallway can see the leader.

Furthermore, at any counseling session with youth, the door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

Each classroom for children and youth should ideally have a door with a window in it or a half door, which could then be kept closed. If it does not, and two leaders are not present in the room, then the door must remain open at all times.

The above policy extends to all church-sponsored programs, including overnight and transportation-related events in so far as practicable. If it is necessary, for instance, for an adult to take a child or youth home after an event, an effort should be made to contact the family and inform them of the situation before transporting the child or youth. It is always advisable for leaders to give parents advance notice and full information regarding the event in which their child or youth will be participating.