



Child Protection Policies & Procedures

Updated Summer 2022

Introduction

At New St. Peter's, we are committed to creating and maintaining a safe environment for children and the adults who work with them. The responsibility for creating and maintaining a safe environment resides with the New St. Peter's Session, staff, and a Child Safety Committee.

The Child Safety Committee shall be composed of all staff who are responsible for ministry to children and youth such as the children's ministry director and youth pastor/director. In addition to staff serving on the committee, additional members shall be selected from members of the congregation with experience in related fields, such as mental health, childhood trauma treatment, child abuse prevention, victim services, etc.

At least one of the members of this committee shall be a ruling elder. The size of this committee shall be determined by the leadership of the church.

This committee shall meet at least once per year and be available for a called meeting at any time such a meeting is necessary to address any situation that arises. Thorough records of all decisions that are made shall be kept in a secure location and reviewed annually by the committee. A chairperson shall be selected from among the group. The chairperson and the ruling elder shall be responsible to report on the work of this committee to the Session on a regular basis, but no less than once a year and when any major decision is made by the committee that needs sessional approval.

Four Documents

New St. Peter's shall maintain four guiding documents that shall be reviewed annually. The four documents are:

- Document #1. **The Policy Document:** This document encompasses the administrative actions the Session is bound to follow regarding such matters as who will be allowed to serve children, when

permission to serve is revoked, following TX mandated reporting laws, communications to the congregation and community if there is ever an incident and any other administrative matter revolving around children's ministry. This is primarily a sessional document but will be made available for anyone to read. All paid staff and/or volunteers in leadership roles with children and youth, along with the chairman and ruling elder on the Child Safety Committee shall work with the session to review and update this document annually. This document can be edited only by a vote of the Session.

- Documents #2a and #2b. **The Code of Conduct:** This document describes the boundaries adults are to maintain when working with children. Every staff person working with children and all regular volunteers shall be required to read the Code of Conduct and sign an acknowledgement form every year. In the event an auxiliary volunteer is needed for a special event or to fill a last minute and unexpected vacancy, every effort will be made to review the Code of Conduct with the auxiliary volunteer. At no time shall an auxiliary volunteer be in any kind of supervisory role with children but must always serve only as an assistant to a staff person or regular, trained volunteer. This document shall be reviewed annually by the Child Safety Committee and substantive edits to the document must be approved by the session. Document 2b is a Code of Conduct specifically for student volunteers
- Document #3. **Reporting Protocol/Incident Report:** The Reporting Protocol documents defines who is a mandated reporter in the children's ministry program (everyone working with children is a mandated reporter under current TX law), what forms of abuse are required to be reported and the steps the individual and church leadership shall take in making that report. In addition to the Reporting Protocol there is a companion document called the Incident Report. This document is to be completed prior to a report being made to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). It is designed to collect important information prior to that call being made so that DFPS can better determine if the child is at risk and how to proceed with the information. Once anyone fills out an Incident Report, a call to DFPS must be made. Texas requires that all calls to DFPS be made within 24 hours of disclosure or suspicion of abuse. This document shall be reviewed by the Child Safety Committee each year, paying special attention to any changes in the TX mandated reporter laws. Any change to this document must be made by the session.

- Document #4. **Procedures Document:** The Procedures Document outlines how ministry to children and youth will be carried out. This document deals with the practical matters such as how we screen and train volunteers, diaper changes, bathroom breaks, adults-child ratios, discipline, and off-site activities, etc. The Procedures Document shall be under constant review and revision as we learn new or better ways to carry out ministry to children and youth. There should be one major review annually. Changes to this document can be made by the Child Safety Committee without session approval unless it involves a change in the Policy Document, Code of Conduct, or Reporting Protocol.



NEW ST. PETER'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Document #1

Child Protection Policies

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belong the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:16)

We at New St. Peter's joyfully embrace the calling of Jesus to go and make disciples of all people in the world, including children! Jesus tells us to baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey everything that he has told us. "You can be sure that I will be with you always," he promises. "I will continue with you until the end of the world."

As a church family, our privilege and highest priority regarding children is to introduce them to Jesus and to keep them safe. The biblical mandate to welcome and protect children is clear. As we abide in Christ together, parents and the church are stewards of the children God entrusts to us and must be diligent to create a safe, secure, and loving environment where we can faithfully hold out the good news of Jesus Christ to children and families.

We are aware that for too many children, safety and security have not been part of their lives. There is an epidemic of child maltreatment that impacts hundreds of thousands of children every year. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have profound impacts on the lives of children physically, emotionally and spiritually.

New St. Peter's recognizes that child sexual abuse has been a major problem in our culture for decades. The adults in our congregation grew up at a time when 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys were sexually abused before their 18th birthday. This means that among our adult members and visitors there will be survivors of child sexual abuse. It is also our responsibility to minister to children in such a way that it reaffirms for these survivors that this church is a safe place that offers hope and healing to everyone whose life has been impacted by sexual abuse.

We are a community founded on grace and truth, and therefore we want to offer Jesus' grace to past offenders. While this policy is aimed at child protection, we want to recognize that repentance and life change are not only possible, but part and parcel of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When an offender is joined to us in membership, or restored to fellowship after an offense, the policies that follow will help to continue to protect our children and to provide helpful guidance for the repentant for pathways to service in other areas of church life.

Our policies and procedures are established on these core beliefs:

- The life and ministry of Christ demonstrates the priority children have in His kingdom's work. He gave His full attention to caring for and ministering to children as well as including them in the work of the gospel.
- Children's ministry is not secondary or a distraction from the main work of the church. It is of utmost importance.
- No child should ever experience abuse in any form.
- It is not acceptable that a child could go through our children's ministry program while being abused and never find a safe adult to tell.
- We will always act in the best interest of a victim and survivors of abuse.

New St. Peter's has a zero tolerance policy with regard to child abuse and neglect. Therefore, we have established the following policies:

1. In order to prevent child abuse, New St. Peter's addresses child safety through appropriate screening and supervision of all activities involving children and youth. (see document #4)
2. Anyone who is known or determined to have committed abuse of a child under the age of 18 or of a person with an emotional or mental disability at any time during his/her adult life is not eligible for service either as employee or a volunteer and, if already serving, will have his/her service with New St. Peter's terminated immediately, with no later opportunity to serve as an employee or volunteer to work with children or youth.
3. New St. Peter's will not knowingly allow anyone who has been convicted of child abuse to participate in any children's ministry,

either as a staff or volunteer.

4. Anyone who committed child abuse or neglect before the age of 18 will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account such factors as age, seriousness of the offense, acknowledgement of responsibility, and effective treatment. This process will include seeking outside help in the form of relevant experts
5. Any employee or volunteer whose dependent children have been determined to have committed child abuse will be asked to follow through with an action plan put in place to resolve the causes and effects of the abuse, taking into account such factors as age, age difference between offender and victim(s), developmental differences, seriousness of the offense(s), acknowledgement of responsibility, and effective treatment. Failure to follow the action plan will lead to termination of their service with New St. Peter's children's ministry. Reapplication would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and involve effective treatment and other factors listed above.
6. If New St. Peter's is asked for a reference for anyone whose service or membership was terminated due to a violation of our Code of Conduct, New St. Peter's will generally disclose the reasons for termination. Further, if New St. Peter's becomes aware that a former employee or volunteer of New St. Peter's who was dismissed becomes employed by or volunteers to work with children or youth in another organization, New St. Peter's will seek legal counsel on our duty to warn the organization by making that organization aware of the reasons for New St. Peter's termination of employment of the individual.
7. Failure to follow the Child Protection Policy or the Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, if on staff. If a volunteer, such failure will result in the exercise of church discipline by the session and according to the Book of Church Order.
8. If it is determined that a staff person has violated our Code of Conduct or willfully harms a child, they will not be allowed to voluntarily resign but will have their employment terminated.
9. In cases where corroborating evidence shows that a person previously employed by New St. Peter's committed child abuse

while in the employ of New St. Peter's, their personnel file will reflect such, and they will be considered ineligible for re-hire.

10. New St. Peter's staff and volunteers will comply with all Texas Mandated Reporting laws. Staff and volunteers are required to follow the New St. Peter's Church Mandated Reporter Protocol (see document #3).

11. Once an Incident Report has been filed by a staff or volunteer, according to our Reporting Protocol, a report must be made to The Department of Family and Protective Services within 24 hours of the original disclosure or suspicion of abuse.

12. New St. Peter's will deal with all concerns and issues of child safety in our children's program with full transparency. When a report is made to DFPS involving a member of staff or a volunteer at New St. Peter's, our Church leadership shall communicate to the congregation the fact that an incident has occurred, that the appropriate authorities as required by law have been contacted, and that steps to protect children have been taken. All communications must be as transparent as possible without violating the rights of privacy of those involved and without interfering with law enforcement's investigation of that incident.

13. No portion of this policy can be amended by any individual, nor can any individual grant permission to deviate from this policy. Any change to this policy must be granted only by a vote of the Elders and no one else.

Approved by New St. Peter's Session
Date: 7/13/22



Document #2a

Code of Conduct

What is a Code of Conduct?

All staff and volunteers who work with children are expected to interact with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring, responsible manner, with a high level of accountability. This Code of Conduct describes how adults will interact with children and the boundaries they are expected to observe. By being vigilant in following the Code of Conduct, we will help protect children from abuse. The most effective way to reduce abuse of children is to be vigilant.

Accountability

All adult staff and volunteers are responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others in order to maintain our high level of professionalism. As an adult working with children, you agree to interact with the children by observing these principles. It is our expectation that you understand your responsibility to observe the interaction between adults and children and when you see interaction that is questionable, inappropriate or crossing a child's boundaries, you will intervene on behalf of the child. Such intervention may include:

- Remaining present with the child in order to provide him/her a sense of safety;
- Redirecting the child to join other children in a different area;
- Speaking to the adult and stating the boundary violation you have observed and reminding them of the responsibility to abide by this code of conduct;

In all cases violations of this Code of Conduct shall be reported to the Director of Children's Ministry or Youth Pastor. Such a report shall be handled

with the highest degree of confidentiality. See the Reporting Protocol/Incident Report document below for more information

You also give permission to the other adults in our programs to take these intervening actions if you are seen crossing safe boundaries or violating this code of conduct.

Visibility

All work with children shall be observable and interruptible, that is, planned and carried out in a way that minimizes risks as far as possible. This includes being visible to other adults when working with children. Adults shall not be in a room alone with a child with the door closed, or in any area that is secluded or hidden from view.

If a child with a disability is in need of assistance for personal hygiene or safety for the child or others there may be the need for the assigned "buddy" or caregiver to provide what the child needs. Such interactions should be as visible as possible. The adult should also inform a leader or another adult that they need to assist or care for the child and ask that someone remain nearby to provide as much accountability as possible.

Overcoming Isolation

To protect our children, staff and volunteers, at no time during a program may an adult be alone with a single child where others cannot observe the interaction. We expect all adults to reduce isolation by having a minimum of two children present, informing the child's parent of any meeting you wish to have with the child, and doing it during a time and/or in a location where your interaction with the child is visible to others. Isolation could be overcome, for example, by taking two or more children to the bathroom together rather than only one, dropping off siblings last in a carpool, or taking your own child or spouse along when providing rides. In the event of a student (middle or high school age) needing a ride on their own and only one adult chaperone is available to drive, the adult must contact the parents prior to the ride asking for their permission, allow access for the student to

talk on their or the chaperone's phone with the student's parents during the ride, and confirm with the parents upon reaching the public destination. We expect an adequate number of adults to supervise youth events, especially overnight activities.

When ministry to a child involves one-on-one contact, the following procedures shall be followed, as applicable:

- Always be accountable to other adults regarding your interactions with youth or children by informing the ministry leader and or parents when, where and for how long your one-on-one interaction will be.
- The activity must be in a public place that is visible to others, never in a private or secluded location, such as a room with the door closed or in a home alone with the child or student.
- Counseling or other necessarily confidential meetings with children shall be done in an office with a window in the door and only when another adult is in close vicinity, aware that the meeting is occurring, and willing to stay in the vicinity until it is completed; and
- Parents and/or supervisors are to be notified beforehand of any activities with youth or children.

In an unexpected situation when you find yourself alone with a child, find someone to join you if at all possible, or notify any available adult.

Parent Involvement

Parents are responsible for knowing where their children are at all times. Therefore, parents shall be informed of planned activities. Parents shall be encouraged to make unannounced visits to program activities as a way of reducing isolation and monitoring the interaction between adults and children.

Supervision

Supervision reduces risk. Program administrators and leaders shall periodically and randomly inspect classrooms, offices, work areas and other areas where children and adults are together.

Technology

Technology should be used appropriately to protect children or youth from abuse and exploitation. Volunteers and staff shall not engage in social networking, texting or any other means of private communication with children and youth without the permission of the parents or guardian. All electronic communication must not be erased or deleted and made available for review upon request by the ministry leader or Pastor.

Discipline

Discipline should be used to teach and correct rather than punish. It shall not include slapping, hitting, shaming, yelling at, or belittling a child.

Touch

Because healthy, caring touch is valuable to children, but unhealthy touch is abusive, the following guidelines apply:

- Touch shall be open rather than secretive.
- A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to the need of the child, and not the need of the adult.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult.
- It should be with the child's permission and any resistance from the child should be respected.
- Touch should always communicate respect for the child.

Adults should avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they are able to do for themselves, including personal hygiene and bathroom breaks, dressing, bathing, etc.

Adults and other youth or children should not hit, slap, pinch, push, hold against their will, or otherwise assault children. Some children with special needs may exhibit more aggression than other children as part of their developmental progress. When such aggression is exhibited by a child with a disability the behavior is likely not intentional or willful. Care will be given in these situations to make sure all children are safe and cared for.

There may be the occasion when the “buddy” or caregiver of a child with a disability will need the structure and care that appropriate touch can provide. Such touch should be supportive, caring and with the intent of helping the child return to a safe, secure and calm state.

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within specific contexts: verbal praise, side hugs, shoulder to shoulder hugs, pats on the shoulder, back, or head (when culturally appropriate). For smaller children, touching their hands, faces, shoulders and arms, arms around their shoulders, hugs, or holding them when others are present.

The following behaviors between staff or volunteers and children are inappropriate and shall not be engaged in: touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs; 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; any form of affection that is unwanted by the child; showing sexually-suggestive videos or playing sexually-suggestive games with any child; any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual in nature.

Adult members shall monitor each other in the area of physical contact, helping each other by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.

Showing Favoritism

Adults shall avoid favoring or showing differential treatment to a particular child or youth to the exclusion of others.

Adults shall not give gifts to any specific child or youth without requesting and receiving permission from a parent or legal guardian.

For children and adults with disabilities it is more natural that a child will form meaningful attachments to 1 or 2 individuals. The interaction or attention given by the adults a child has made a connection with could appear to be showing favoritism or singling out these children. When such attachments are created it is important to monitor those interactions to make sure proper boundaries are maintained.

Verbal Interaction

Words can also be used to support and encourage a child, such as praise, positive reinforcement, and appropriate jokes. Inappropriate verbal interaction includes the following: shaming, belittling, humiliating, name calling, using harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate the child, cursing, or making derogatory remarks about the 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.

Reporting of Abuse

When anyone has reason to suspect, receives a disclosure of, or has knowledge of child abuse within the scope of New St. Peter's work and ministry, he or she must make a report according to our Reporting Protocol. This includes abuse that happens while engaged in church activities or abuse that takes place outside of a church activities, such as at school or a youth serving organization.

Children with Disabilities:

Because our church is committed to ministering to children with disabilities, we have to take into consideration some of the challenges developmental difference creates for us. Therefore, we have to allow assigned "buddies" or caregivers the flexibility to address the need for care and safety when that time comes. For purposes of this Code of Conduct any such flexibility applies only to situations that involve a child who has a diagnosis of disability from a licensed professional. We understand that there will be occasions when caring for these children will require more individual interaction and attention. In some of those cases one person assisting the child may be the best way to help that child return to a safe, secure and calm state. There could be times when that interaction will be less visible for a brief period of time. When visibility may be restricted the adult must ensure a high level of accountability to others for the interaction. Those situations will be delineated throughout this document.

Approved by New St. Peter's Presbyterian Church Session
Date: 7/13/22

Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have read and agree to follow the New St. Peter's Code of Conduct. I have read and agree to abide by the New St. Peter's Reporting Protocol. In addition, it is my responsibility to read and comply with any future updates to any and all of our child protection documents.

I affirm that I have never engaged in any abusive activity with a child, as detailed on p. 23 of the "reporting protocol document". I affirm that if I have been accused of and/or investigated for child abuse, I will disclose this to the ministry director or the supervising elder of the ministry and will provide documentation of the outcome of the accusation and investigation. I understand that this disclosure will be shared with the session as confidential information.

I agree not to engage in any such behaviors.

I further agree that as an individual who has engendered trust from a child, I will not tolerate physical, emotional or sexual child abuse or neglect.

I understand the importance of accountability to the other adults who work with children.

Therefore, I give my permission for anyone who observes any inappropriate or questionable interaction between me and a child to speak to me regarding their observation. I will not take offense when approached by someone with concerns about my interaction, because I understand that the protection of each child must be my first priority.

I agree to immediately report to the appropriate leadership any reasonable suspicion of or disclosure of inappropriate behavior between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one has power over the other by virtue of age, development, or physical abilities, in accordance with our Reporting Protocol.

Name

Date

Position

Supervisor's Signature

Date Approved by New St. Peter's Presbyterian Church Session :



Document #2b

Student Volunteer Code of Conduct

What is a Code of Conduct?

All staff and volunteers who work with children are expected to work with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring, responsible manner, with a high level of accountability. This Code of Conduct describes how our student volunteers will work with children and the boundaries they are expected to observe. Closely following this Code of Conduct will help us protect children from abuse. The best way to reduce abuse of children is to be aware and to keep watch.

Accountability

All adult staff and volunteers and all student volunteers need to maintain our high level of professionalism. As a student volunteer with children, you agree to work with the children by following what this says. We want you to understand your responsibility to not only follow this Code of Conduct but to act when you see anyone crossing a child's boundaries or violating the Code of Conduct. Such action may include:

- Remaining present with the child in order to provide him/her a sense of safety;
- Redirecting the child to join other children in a different area;

All cases of people breaking this Code of Conduct shall be reported to the Director of Children's Ministry. Such a report shall be handled with the highest degree of privacy. See the Reporting Protocol/Incident Report document below for more information

You also give permission to the other adults in our programs to take these same actions if you are seen crossing safe boundaries or breaking this code of conduct.

Visibility

All work with our children will be done so that others can see what is going on and stop it if needed. We want things to be planned and carried out in a way that reduces risks as far as possible. This includes being visible to other adults when working with children. Adults and student volunteers shall not be in a room alone with a child with the door closed, or in any area that is secret or hidden from view.

If a child with a disability is in need of assistance for personal hygiene or safety for the child or others there may be the need for the assigned "buddy" or caregiver to provide what the child needs. Such actions should be as visible as possible. The volunteer should also inform a leader or another adult that they need to assist or care for the child and ask that someone remain nearby to provide as much accountability as possible.

Overcoming Isolation

To protect our children, staff and volunteers, at no time during a program may an adult or student volunteer be alone with a single child where others cannot see what is going on. We expect all adults and student volunteers to reduce isolation by having a minimum of two children present, telling the child's parent of any meeting you wish to have with the child, and doing it during a time and/or in a location where your interaction with the child is visible to others. Isolation could be overcome, for example, by taking two or more children to the bathroom together rather than only one, dropping off siblings last in a carpool, or taking a friend or sibling along when providing rides.

When ministry to a child involves one-on-one contact, you need to do the following things, as they apply:

- Always be accountable to other adults regarding your time with youth or children by telling the ministry leader and or parents when, where and for how long your one-on-one time will be.

- The activity must be in a public place that is visible to others, never in a private or secret location, such as a room with the door closed or in a home alone with the child or student.
- Parents and/or supervisors are to be notified beforehand of any activities with youth or children.

In an unexpected situation when you find yourself alone with a child, find someone to join you if at all possible, or tell any available adult.

Parent Involvement

Parents are responsible for knowing where their children are at all times. Therefore, parents shall be told of planned activities. Parents shall be encouraged to make unannounced visits to program activities as a way of reducing isolation and seeing the interaction between adults and children.

Supervision

Supervision reduces risk. Program administrators and leaders shall regularly and randomly look at classrooms, offices, work areas and other areas where children and adults are together.

Technology

Technology should be used appropriately to protect children or youth from abuse and mistreatment. Volunteers and staff shall not engage in social networking, texting or any other means of private communication with children and youth without the permission of the parents or guardian. All electronic communication must not be erased or deleted and made available for review upon request by the ministry leader or Pastor.

Discipline

Discipline should be used to teach and correct rather than punish. It shall not include slapping, hitting, shaming, yelling at, or belittling a child.

Touch

Because healthy, caring touch is valuable to children, but unhealthy touch is abusive, the following guidelines apply:

- Touch shall be open rather than secretive.
- A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to the need of the child, and not the need of the adult.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally started by the child rather than the adult.
- It should be with the child's permission and any resistance from the child should be respected.
- Touch should always communicate respect for the child.

Adults and student volunteers should avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they are able to do for themselves, including personal hygiene and bathroom breaks, dressing, bathing, etc.

Adults and other youth or children should not hit, slap, pinch, push, hold against their will, or otherwise hurt children. Some children with special needs may exhibit more aggression than other children as part of their developmental progress. When such aggression is shown by a child with a disability the behavior is likely not intentional or willful. Care will be given in these situations to make sure all children are safe and cared for.

There may be the occasion when the "buddy" or caregiver of a child with a disability will need the structure and care that appropriate touch can provide. Such touch should be supportive, caring and with the intent of helping the child return to a safe, secure and calm state.

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within specific contexts: verbal praise, side hugs, shoulder to shoulder hugs, pats on the shoulder, back, or head (when culturally appropriate). For smaller children,

touching their hands, faces, shoulders and arms, arms around their shoulders, hugs, or holding them when others are present.

The following behaviors between staff or volunteers and children are inappropriate and shall not be engaged in: touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs; 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; any form of affection that is unwanted by the child; showing sexually-suggestive videos or playing sexually-suggestive games with any child; any behavior that could be understood as sexual in nature.

Members shall monitor each other in the area of physical contact, helping each other by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.

Showing Favoritism

Adults and student volunteers shall avoid favoring or showing different treatment to a particular child or youth and not to others

Adults and student volunteers shall not give gifts to any specific child or youth without requesting and receiving permission from a parent or legal guardian.

For children and adults with disabilities it is more natural that a child will form meaningful attachments to 1 or 2 individuals. The interaction or attention given by the adults a child has made a connection with could appear to be showing favoritism or singling out these children. When such attachments are created it is important to watch those interactions to make sure proper boundaries are maintained.

Verbal Interaction

Words can also be used to support and encourage a child, such as praise, positive reinforcement, and appropriate jokes. Inappropriate verbal interaction includes the following: shaming, tearing-down, humiliating, name calling, using harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate the child, cursing, or making insulting remarks about the child.

Inappropriate verbal interaction also includes telling off-color or sexual jokes, making sexually suggestive comments, telling inappropriate secrets, or inappropriately talking about sexual encounters or desires with children.

Reporting of Abuse

When anyone has reason to suspect, is told about, or has knowledge of child abuse within the scope of New St. Peter's work and ministry, he or she must make a report according to our Reporting Protocol. This includes abuse that happens while engaged in church activities or abuse that takes place outside the church, such as at school or a youth serving organization. The Reporting Protocol is attached.

Children with Disabilities:

Because our church is committed to ministering to children with disabilities, we have to remember some of the challenges developmental difference creates for us. Therefore, we have to allow assigned "buddies" or caregivers the flexibility to address the need for care and safety when that time comes. For purposes of this Code of Conduct any such flexibility applies only to situations that involve a child who has a diagnosis of disability from a licensed professional. We understand that there will be times when caring for these children will require more individual interaction and attention. In some of those cases one person assisting the child may be the best way to help that child return to a safe, secure and calm state. There could be times when that interaction will be less visible for a brief period of time. When visibility may be restricted the adult must ensure a high level of accountability to others for the interaction. Those situations will be described throughout this document.

Approved by New St. Peter's Session
Date: 7/13/22

Student Volunteer Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have read and agree to follow the New St. Peter's Code of Conduct. I have read and agree to abide by the New St. Peter's Reporting Protocol. In addition, it is my responsibility to read and obey any future updates to any and all of our child protection documents.

I further agree that as an individual who has engendered trust from a child, I will not allow physical, emotional or sexual child abuse or neglect.

I understand the importance of accountability to the adults who work with children. Therefore, I give my permission for anyone who sees any inappropriate or questionable interaction between me and a child to speak to me about what they saw. I will not take offense when someone comes to me with concerns about my interaction, because I understand that the protection of each child must be my first priority.

I agree to immediately report to the appropriate leadership any reasonable suspicion I have, story I have heard, or proof I have of inappropriate behavior between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one has power over the other by virtue of age, development, or physical abilities, in agreement with our Reporting Protocol.

Student's Name: _____ Date: _____

Parental Approval Signature:

"I have read and discussed this Code of Conduct with my child and approve their participation."

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Approved for Service by _____ Date: _____

Document approved by New St. Peter's Session
Date: 7/13/22



Document #3

Reporting Protocol

Texas law requires **anyone** who suspects child abuse or neglect to report those suspicions to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) or to a local law enforcement agency immediately upon suspicion. This includes clergy, staff, and all volunteers in a church.

A mandated reporter is anyone who is required by law to report to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect. A person who suspects child abuse or neglect, but fails to report it, can be charged with a misdemeanor or state jail felony. Remember, reporting suspected child abuse or neglect makes it possible for a child to get help.

Therefore, New St. Peter's has established the following Reporting Protocol.

What am I required to report?

The minimum standard for a report to be made to DFPS is any "reasonable suspicion" of abuse. For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.

- Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Reasonable suspicion does not mean you have proof that abuse has occurred.

There are three ways you will learn about abuse:

- A child discloses abuse
- You observe abuse
- You have reasonable suspicion of abuse

When a child discloses abuse or you observe abuse, you must report the abuse by following the reporting protocol below.

Reasonable suspicion is harder to determine than receiving a disclosure or observing abuse. At New St. Peter's, we have a Code of Conduct that describes the boundaries adults are to maintain when interacting with children. Every adult who works with children must sign our Code of Conduct, acknowledging they agree to abide by the Code of Conduct when interacting with children. When an adult agrees to our Code of Conduct, he/she gives permission to any adult who observes any inappropriate or questionable behavior to speak to him/her about what has been observed and to remind them of the commitment we have made to maintain safe boundaries between adults and children.

It is our expectation that you understand your responsibility to observe the interaction between adults and children and when you see interaction that is questionable, inappropriate or crossing a child's boundaries, you will intervene on behalf of the child. Such intervention may include:

- Remaining present with the child in order to provide him/her a sense of safety;
- Redirecting the child to join other children in a different area;
- Speaking to the adult and stating the boundary violation you have observed and reminding them of the responsibility to abide by this code of conduct;

In all cases, violations of this Code of Conduct shall be reported to the Director of Children's Ministry or the Youth Pastor. Such a report shall be handled with the highest degree of confidentiality.

If there is reason to believe the child is at risk or the response by the adult when held accountable for their actions causes concern, a formal Incident Report described below must be completed.

It may also be determined that there is reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused outside of any church event, such as in the home. In such a case you are still a mandated reporter, even though the abuse is not related to a program or ministry of the church.

Making a report to DFPS does not constitute an accusation of abuse. Making a report means we are requesting that a professional service be performed to determine if a child is at risk and if abuse has occurred.

To whom in the Church is a report made?

If the child is in immediate danger, call law enforcement or 911 immediately. Once law enforcement has been called, you then follow the reporting protocol below (YOU still need to call CPS to report).

PROTOCOL FOR ANY VOLUNTEER, STAFF MEMBER, OR CLERGY

If you have received a disclosure of abuse, you have observed abuse, or you have reasonable suspicion of abuse, you must report it immediately (as soon as reasonably possible) *directly to DFPS* (Child Protective Services- see contact below). Reporting to a pastor or ministry staff member, while part of the process outlined below does not fulfill your mandated reporter requirements. The process is as follows:

Step 1: Locate a pastor or ministry staff member. Give a brief verbal report to the pastor or ministry staff member. They will then give you an incident report form

Step 2: Fill out the incident report in detail, to the best of your knowledge. You may leave unknown information blank, but you must give a written account of the suspected or disclosed abuse. After completing the form, sign it and give it to the ministry staff member

Step 3: Call the Texas Abuse Hotline (see contact below) to make a report with CPS.

Step 4: Retain a copy of the incident report for your records. One copy will be kept secure at the church office.

The Incident Report

After the verbal report has been made, the Reporter must complete an Incident Report (provided by the ministry director or pastor) and submit the completed, signed and dated form to the person to whom it was verbally reported. The Incident Report must be submitted as soon as possible. Again, this DOES NOT fulfill your mandatory reporting obligations. You must still report directly to DFPS (Child Protective Services).

If the verbal report was given to the individual in charge of the event (if neither the ministry director nor the pastor was on site to receive the verbal report), the Reporter then is responsible, as soon as practically possible, to contact the ministry director or pastor as well, to initiate the Incident Report completion.

The Reporter and the person receiving the Incident Report (ministry director or pastor) must each sign the Incident Report, noting the dates and times the Incident Report was signed. Both the Reporter and the person receiving the report must retain a copy of the Incident Report with both signatures showing dates and times.

Any ministry director who receives an Incident Report must forward the original Incident Report to the pastor (or the person designated by the pastor to receive these reports). These reports will be kept confidential at the church office.

The reporter must notify the pastor or ministry director of the date and time the incident was reported to DFPS or law enforcement, and this must be noted on the Incident Report, which will be kept in the church office in a secure file.

The Reporter cannot be denied the opportunity to report directly and without anyone else's knowledge to DFPS, but should understand that, by following the above Reporting Protocol, he/she is creating documentation that they have fulfilled their role as mandatory reporters and allowing the staff and pastors the opportunity to help shepherd through this difficult situation.

Texas law requires that all reports of abuse must be made to DFPS immediately following the original disclosure or suspicion of abuse.

How is a report made to DFPS?

To make a report, call the Texas Abuse Hotline:

You may call the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 to report abuse or neglect. The hotline is answered by DFPS Intake Specialists (who are all degreed professionals) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

You will be asked to provide your name and contact information.

You will be asked to explain your concerns. The Intake Specialist might ask additional questions to determine if the situation that you describe meets the Texas Family Code's definitions of abuse or neglect.

In non-urgent situations, you may report online (<https://www.txabusehotline.org>), though approval by a pastor must be obtained before foregoing telephone reporting in favor of online reporting.

Approved by New St. Peter's Session

Date: 7/13/22



NEW ST. PETER'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Incident Report Form
Confidential

Reporter & Child Information

Name of staff or volunteer receiving a disclosure of child abuse or having reason to suspect child abuse has occurred

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

CHILD INFORMATION:

Child's Name:

Child's Age:

Date of Birth:

Class grade:

Parent(s) or legal guardian name(s) and contact information (phone and email):

Address where the child resides:

INCIDENT INFORMATION:

Are you reporting a disclosure or suspicion of abuse (circle one)?

Disclosure

Suspicion

Disclosure (if applicable):

Date you received the disclosure:

Time of day you received the disclosure:

Where did you receive the disclosure?

How did the child disclose to you (verbally, text message, etc):

Provide the child's statement if you received a disclosure (as best as you remember, use the exact words the child said or communicated; continue on back of page if necessary. If the child communicated electronically, please provide a copy of the communication. (DO NOT INTERROGATE OR QUESTION THE CHILD!)

Name of person accused of the abuse:

Relationship of accused to the child (Paid staff, volunteer, family member, other (specify)):

Contact information of the accused:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

(DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CONTACT THE ACCUSED!)

Suspicion (if applicable):

Name of the adult you suspect:

How is this person engaged in ministry at New St. Peter's: (Paid staff, volunteer, family member, other (specify)):

If the person suspected is not engaged in the ministry of New St. Peter's, what is this person's relationship to the child:

Contact information of the accused:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

(DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CONTACT THIS ADULT!)

Describe in detail the behavior you observed or the boundary violation of our Code of Conduct that causes your suspicion:

Reporting Information

Name of the person receiving the report:

Position held in the church:

Date of this Report:

Time this Incident Report was received by church leadership:

Signature of the reporter:

Signature of the one receiving the report:

Child Protective Services Contact information

How was TX DFPS contacted (phone call, email, or digital form)?

If the report was made via a phone call, list the names of all those from New St. Peter's on the call:

Date and time report was made to DFPS:

Signature of the person(s) who completed this portion of the incident report:



Document #4

Procedures Document

The Procedures Document is divided into 2 parts. Part One covers the universal procedures that apply to all programs in our children's and youth ministries. Part Two contains procedures specific to each age group or program we provide. Everyone must read and understand all of Part One. In Part Two identify the section that applies to the age group you will be working with to learn what is expected.

Part One: Universal Procedures:

The following procedures serve as the overall structure for children's ministry.

Definitions of Terms

Staff: Anyone who is employed by New St. Peter's Presbyterian Church, either part-time or full-time.

Children's Ministry Director: The person on staff who directs and manages all children's ministry programs, activities, and volunteers. The current Children's Ministry Director is Kelly Meyer.

Volunteer: Anyone who freely offers to work with children on a regular basis and who has received permission to volunteer after completion of the application process.

Youth Volunteer: A youth volunteer is a child (anyone under the age of 18 and over the age of 12) who assists in the children's ministry. A youth volunteer must have parental permission to work with children and be approved by the Children's Ministry Director. Youth volunteers will never be allowed to supervise children or be alone with a child.

Auxiliary Volunteer: In the unlikely event the number of children participating in a program exceeds the number of adults needed to maintain safety and control, the church may ask for additional volunteers who have not been screened to help on a one-time basis. These will be known as "auxiliary volunteers".

Child: A child is anyone under the age of 18.

Mandated Reporter: A mandated reporter is anyone required by TX law to report to Child Protective Services (hereafter referred to as CPS) any disclosure of or reasonable suspicion of abuse. All church staff and volunteers at New St. Peter's are mandated reporters. Definitions of child maltreatment that are to be reported are found in the Mandated Reporting section of this document.

Incident: An "incident" refers to any action or suspicion of violating our Code of Conduct, inappropriate behavior, or a disclosure of or suspicion of abuse.

Incident Report: The incident report is the document that, once completed, will automatically activate the reporting protocol and a call to Child Protective Services (CPS).

Violation Report: Any time an adult crosses a boundary or violates our Code of Conduct that action shall be noted in a report, called a Violation Report. The Violation Report is different from the Incident Report in that it keeps a record of violations that do not rise to the level of making a report to CPS.

Medical Event: A medical event refers to any physical injury or any other situation that involves the physical health of a child. All medical events must be properly documented and communicated to the parents or caregiver.

Screening

New St. Peter's Presbyterian Church will screen every person who works with children using the following tools.

Written Application:

Anyone seeking permission to work with children must complete a written application. Usually, the applicant should have regularly participated in New St. Peter's worship and programs for 6 months. One reason for a waiting period before working with children is to give the church an opportunity to get to know a new person to determine if children's ministry is the best fit for her/him and to make sure their interactions with children and other adults will make a positive contribution to our children's ministry. There will be occasions when someone is new to the church but very well known from a previous association and their suitability for children's ministry has clearly been demonstrated. For example, our Children's Ministry Director has previously worked with the applicant and has first-hand experience so that the behavior and character of the applicant are well known. Therefore the 6-month waiting period is unnecessary. An exception to the 6-month rule can be granted by the Child Safety Committee. All other aspects of the application process must be followed in this situation.

References:

The applicant must provide 3 references. All these references will be contacted as part of the approval process. Secondary references will be sought by asking the primary references to provide us with one additional name and contact information we can call to verify the applicant's suitability.

Background Checks:

We conduct national criminal background checks on all members of New St. Peter's, including children's volunteers, through Ministry Safe (paid for by NsP).

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in our nursery/worship training area;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children;
- Those counseling children;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of children; and
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with children (such as church sponsored vehicle drivers).

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign a form authorizing the church to run the check through Ministry Safe. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, she or he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Children's Ministry Director or Youth Pastor and Senior Pastor on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the **NsP** office, and **background checks will be performed every 3 years with the consent of the volunteer.**

Training

New St. Peter's believes thorough training is necessary to create a safe environment for children and the adults who work with them. We understand that busy adults often resist investing their valuable time to attend training sessions. However, there is the expectation that everyone who works with children receives annual training. When an adult agrees to work in our children's ministry program, they commit to participate in all training activities. All training sessions are to be considered mandatory.

Initial training for new staff and volunteers:

The initial training will be more extensive than refresher training for current staff and volunteers already serving. The initial training will include completing the Ministry Safe Sexual Abuse training program before working with children. Also included in this initial training will be a thorough review of all our child protection documents, especially the Code of Conduct and Reporting Protocol. Acknowledgment of the completion of all required training will be kept on file.

Annual refresher training:

Yearly, all staff and volunteers will participate in a refresher course. This refresher course will include, but not be limited to, a review of the Code of

Conduct which requires an annual acknowledgment signature, the Reporting Protocol and Incident Report form, and any other necessary reminders and updates to our documents and program guidelines.

Youth Volunteer training:

Youth volunteers are expected to maintain appropriate boundaries when assisting adults in children's ministry. All youth volunteers must receive sufficient training to ensure they understand those boundaries and what to do if they observe anyone violating our Code of Conduct. Each youth volunteer will be trained in our Youth Volunteer Code of Conduct document and sign an acknowledgment form. When age-appropriate and with the permission of a parent, youth volunteers may be asked to participate in a Stewards of Children training or similar type prevention training.

Supervision and Oversight

Supervision and oversight of all interaction between children and adults and between children is necessary in creating a safe environment for children and the adults who work with them.

At all times, the interaction between adults and children and between children must be observable to other adults. Those with supervisory roles shall ensure that all activities are planned and carried out in an open area, visible to others, not in an isolated or secluded location. Ministry leaders shall monitor the interaction of volunteers to make sure all procedures and boundaries outlined in the Code of Conduct are maintained.

Only approved volunteers and youth volunteers are permitted to serve in the classroom.

Responding to Suspicious Behavior or Violation of Code of Conduct

The primary purpose of supervision and oversight of interactions between adults and children is to interrupt any pattern of behavior that puts a child at risk. "Grooming" takes place when an adult attempts to manipulate the

organization, parents, and a child to gain access to children for the purpose of abuse. Grooming begins with building trust. Once trust is established, the adult begins to cross boundaries. At first, the boundary violations may appear to be insignificant or isolated. But left unchecked, the boundary violations increase until the adult has access to a child.

The best way to deter and prevent grooming behavior is to address all boundary violations directly with the adult who is seen crossing a boundary or violating our Code of Conduct.

The following steps shall be taken when you observe a boundary violation or a violation of our Code of Conduct.

- You are to report your observation directly to the Children's Ministry Director or Youth Pastor. If either are not available, report to the program director.
- Every violation should be documented and held in a secure file.
- The appropriate staff person, usually the Children's Ministry Director or Youth Pastor, shall speak to the adult whose behavior is being reported. The boundary violation should be explained with the expectation that the behavior will cease. A summary of that conversation and the reaction/response of the adult shall be attached to the documented violation.
- One boundary violation of the Code of Conduct will not automatically disqualify a person from continuing to serve in the Children's or Youth Ministry. But multiple violations, especially after being warned, will result in revocation of permission to serve, and if warranted, a report to Child Protective Services may be made. If the initial violation is severe enough, permission to serve can be revoked, and Child Protective Services may be called.

All documentation of boundary violations must be kept in a secure and locked file.

All boundary violations shall be reported to the Senior Pastor to determine if there is a need for church discipline to be exercised.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

The Mandated Reporting Protocol Document explains the Texas law regarding who is a mandated reporter and how a report is to be made. This document will be reviewed in our annual training. We expect that every adult who works in the children's ministry understands this protocol and agrees to abide by it.

Texas has designated anyone who works or volunteers in an organization that serves children as a mandated reporter. Disclosures of and "reasonable suspicion" of abuse must be reported within 24 hours to Child Protective Services (referred to as CPS.)

In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Children's Ministry Director or Youth Pastor for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at New St. Peter's Presbyterian Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified, unless the child has disclosed abuse by the parent or guardian.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. New St. Peter's will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. New St. Peter's will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. New St. Peter's will comply with any reporting requirements of our insurance policy, including, where applicable, reporting of an incident or potential claim, completion of an incident report, and forwarding any documents relating to the incident and/or allegations to the insurance company.
5. A Pastor or an Elder will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless she or he is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before

responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.

6. New St. Peter's will provide follow-up care after an incident, giving primary attention to the needs of victims and their families through an established Care Team. It is preferred to have members of New St. Peter's Presbyterian Church serve on this Care Team, but individuals outside the church with the skills required may be asked to serve on this team.
7. If a significant incident has occurred, and an internal investigation is inadequate to discover all the facts without bias, the church shall hire an independent investigator. The church will fully cooperate with the work of an independent investigator and will make known to the congregation the full report once it is submitted.
8. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

Part Two: Specific Procedures:

The following procedures are specific procedures applying to the children's and youth ministry areas at New St. Peter's.

Secure Check-in/Check-out Procedures

For children, 5th grade and under, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed for Nursery, Worship Training, and SoLD on Sundays.

- The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "child check" for the child.
- In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the "child check," the Children's Ministry Director will be contacted, and will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.
- For new families, all information should be gathered at this time, including parent contact information, allergies, and any special instructions from the parent (such as feeding a snack).

- A sticker should be printed and placed on each child and the parent should be given the barcoded sticker. If they have a diaper bag that is unlabeled, a sticker can also be printed for their bag.
- To check-out, parents must show their sticker matching that of their child. **Only parents and caregivers are authorized to check children out of ministry programs.**
- Parents/Caregivers are responsible for providing their child(ren) with the following items: diapers, wipes, personal snacks (as needed), bottles, and water (as needed).

Bathroom Protocols

For children, 5th grade and under, please adhere to the following bathroom and diapering protocols:

- **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** should there ever be an adult or youth volunteer alone in the bathroom with a child
- Two adults of the same gender as the child(ren) must accompany any child(ren) to the restroom. If you do not have enough adults, ask the sign-in person or someone from another classroom to accompany the class to the bathroom with you. This is for the protection of both the children and the adults.
- A headcount should be taken prior to leaving the classroom and another done in the restroom prior to returning to the classroom.
- Do not let any children walk to and from the restroom unattended.
- Stools, potty seats, and gloves (for adults) will be available in the restrooms if children need assistance.
- Many 2 and 3 year olds need help in the bathroom. If you have any concerns about appropriate ways to help or questions about situations that may occur, please contact the Children's Ministry Director.
- Please ensure all children and adults wash their hands before exiting.

Diapering Protocols

- Women only should be allowed to change diapers under all circumstances. Youth should also never be assigned to diapering.
- Gloves should be worn and the child should be laid on a disposable changing sheet at the designated diapering area. Hand sanitizer should

be used before diapering and when all diapers have been changed. Gloves should be changed after each diaper change.

- All children should receive a diaper change before the parents arrive for pick up.
- All diapers should be placed in disposable bags and placed in the trash can.

Hygiene and Health

- There is a First-Aid Kit located at the Check-in Table with basic first aid materials.
- If first-aid is needed, the adult tending to the child needs to be gloved and hands should be sanitized before and after administering aid. After the child is cared for, the parent should be texted to be made aware of the situation, even with minor injuries or ailments.
- In an emergency situation, please follow the emergency procedure document.
- If a child has recently been ill, they should not be permitted to attend childcare unless they've been fever, vomit, and diarrhea free *for at least 24 hours*.
- Should a volunteer notice that a child is experiencing any of the following symptoms the parent should be contacted immediately and the child removed from the nursery or preschool classroom:
 - *Fever (Temperature > 99.6 F)
 - *Vomiting
 - *Diarrhea
 - *Infectious Rash
 - *Sore Throat
 - *Persistent Coughing
 - *Yellow or green nasal discharge (from onset through week 1). If discharge is clear, it should be minimal.
 - *Unexplained rashes
 - *Skin infections (i.e. impetigo, boils, ringworm)
 - *Eye infections (i.e. pink eye)
 - *Cold Sores

Ideal Adult-Child Ratios

- Our allotted adult-child ratio at New St. Peter's in both the nursery and preschool areas is *two* adults to every *six* children. **There should never be one adult volunteer in a room alone with a single child (18 years old and younger) under any circumstances.**

Behavioral Concerns

- At New St. Peter's, all behavioral concerns should be looked at not as an excuse to punish, but as ***an opportunity for discipleship***. So what does this mean?
 - What it is NOT: There is NO slapping, hitting, shaming, yelling at, or belittling a child under any circumstances.
 - What it IS: An opportunity to show a child the love of Jesus, through gentle conversation and discipleship.
- Should a behavior concern arise, we ask that volunteers take the following three steps with the child:
 - **Correction and Redirection-** Clearly and confidently state what the child should NOT be doing. Then redirect the child to what they SHOULD be doing. Any distractions or disruptions keeping them from the goal should be removed at this time.
 - **Quiet Time-** If step 1 has proved ineffective, the child should be removed from the area of play. The volunteer should gently and quietly speak to the child in another area of the room, seeking to understand what is going on in the child's heart and mind. The goal is always to make them feel safe, cared for, and loved.
 - **Parental/Caregiver Contact-** If steps 1 and 2 have proven ineffective, the parent or caregiver should be texted and asked to come to the nursery area. The parent/caregiver and the volunteer should together speak to the child about what is going on in their heart and mind. This is a time for the parent and volunteer to come alongside each other in the teaching and training of the child, this does not mean the child needs to be removed from the room.

- Parents/caregivers should be made aware of any and all behavior concerns upon pick up of their child or at the conclusion of the worship service. Again, this is an opportunity for the volunteer and parent or caregiver to come alongside one another in the discipleship of the child.
 - **PLEASE NOTE:** If the behavior of the child is posing an immediate risk to the safety of themselves or others (for example: physical or verbal aggression), one volunteer should remove the child from the area immediately, walk the child to the check-in desk, and text the parent or caregiver and Children's Ministry Director, asking them to please come to the nursery area immediately. The child should be removed from the classroom for the remainder of the day.

Parental Communication

- In the Worship Training area, volunteers should make contact with each parent or guardian upon pickup, letting them know how the morning went and anything else they'd like to note.
- For the 2-3's and 4-5's classes, children will be sent home with a lesson recap for further discipleship in the home.

Social Media

- Parents/caregivers will sign a Social Media consent form allowing pictures or videos to be shared publicly.

Special Events

- New St. Peter's will only utilize trained volunteers during special events outside of Sunday morning worship.
- Children who do not attend New St. Peter's or any that have not signed Social Media Release Forms will not be posted to any New St. Peter's social media promoting the event.

- All special events will be registered for in advance to help with adequate volunteer preparation.
- In the case that there are more children than anticipated, trained substitutes will fill in.

Observation and Monitoring

- Windows to any classrooms being utilized by New St. Peter's volunteers and children should not be obstructed in any way.
- The Children's Ministry Director, Youth Pastor, or designated supervisor should check in at unannounced times as a way to observe and monitor the children and volunteers.

Environmental Scans

- The New St. Peter's Child Safety Committee will periodically review the facilities for any safety concerns. They will ensure that we remain in compliance with the best practice standards for safety.
- The childcare room, hallway, worship area, and restroom should be all that is utilized for childcare under New St. Peter's volunteer supervision. Should you see an adult volunteer leading children elsewhere, please contact the Children's Ministry Director or Youth Pastor immediately.

Approved by New St. Peter's Session

Date: 7/13/22