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Child Protection Policy

INTRODUCTION

To help protect children, Fulton Bible Baptist Church ("Church") has adopted the following child protection policy. The Church has zero tolerance for child mistreatment of any kind. It is vitally important that all Church paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines. The following includes the purpose and definitions for these guidelines, the outlines of protection and prevention of child mistreatment, and an acknowledgment to be signed by those staff and volunteers working with children.

PURPOSE

The Church seeks to express God's love of children and to provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to prevent child abuse and mistreatment of any form to our children and youth and to minister to victims of abuse and their families. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures, and ministries must stand.

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Matthew 18:5–7.

In addition to the biblical mandate to protect children, this policy is designed to:

- 1. Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors, and paid staff.
- 2. Assist the Church in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth by means of appropriate screening procedures.
- 3. Inform volunteers and paid staff workers of their responsibility to—and how to—report to appropriate legal authorities any suspicions of child abuse or neglect.
- 4. Reduce the possibility of false accusations of abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

Our goal in response to these biblical and legal mandates is to maintain a safe, secure, and loving place where children may grow and a place where caregivers, teachers, and leaders (both paid and volunteer) minister appropriately to their needs.

GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

Incidents of child abuse or neglect cut across racial, social, economic, and religious boundaries. Although no organization or individual can assure complete protection, this child protection policy reflects the Church's commitment to help protect children from harm. This policy applies to all volunteer and paid workers. The Church will not tolerate mistreatment of a child in any form. Your agreement with this commitment not only reflects your concern about children's safety in this society, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all those who participate in Church-sponsored activities with children and youth are required to comply with the guidelines provided in this policy. Additionally, prior to working with the children or youth at the Church, each person must sign the Child Protection Policy Worker Acknowledgment Form at the end of this policy, which reflects your agreement to abide by the policy's terms.

DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used herein and are defined as follows:

- A. Adult: any person age 18 or older.
- B. Child or Youth: any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday.
- C. **Child Abuse:** child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. The law typically uses the following definitions and explanations in determining whether a child has been abused:
 - Physical Abuse: a physical injury, threat of injury, or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation, bone fracture, brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma, burns, scalding, cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions, internal injuries, poisoning, sprains, dislocations, gunshot and stabbing wounds.
 - 2. **Physical Neglect:** the failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler being left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment; inadequate supervision, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, or food; and malnutrition.
 - 3. Sexual Abuse: abuse that consists of sexual contact or interactions with a child, including physical contact (fondling, sexual intercourse) and nonphysical contact (exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, voyeurism).
 - 4. **Medical Neglect:** refusal or failure by the caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental, or dental care for a condition which, if untreated, could result in illness or developmental delays.
 - 5. **Failure to Thrive:** a syndrome of infancy or early childhood that is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental delays. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.
 - 6. **Mental Abuse/Neglect:** a pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker that results in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.
 - 7. Emotional Abuse: verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading

communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying.

- 8. **Educational Neglect:** the child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.
- 9. **Bizarre Discipline:** where the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational, or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior.
- D. **Corporal Punishment:** any punishment applied to the body but not limited to slapping, spanking, pinching, pulling, or squeezing.

PAID AND VOLUNTEER WORKER SCREENING

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within the Church, all paid and volunteer workers will be screened in accordance with the following procedures:

SIX-MONTH RULE

Volunteer workers must be members and must have been regular attendees of the Church for at least six months prior to the time they begin serving with children in Church-sponsored activities.

STAFF/VOLUNTEER SCREENING FORM

Any paid staff or volunteers who intend to work with minors must complete the Staff/Volunteer Screening Form. All information provided on the form will be verified, and references will be checked.

Screening forms include a statement, which the applicant must acknowledge in writing, certifying that statements provided in the application are true and complete. Any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of the applicant or for dismissal if he or she is employed. This statement authorizes the Church to contact any individual or organization listed in the application. This statement also includes a liability release for any injury to reputation or otherwise that may result from the Church's investigation into the applicant's background.

INTERVIEW WITH PASTOR OR STAFF

All applicants whom the Church is considering for a position working with children or youth will be interviewed by the pastor or staff person responsible for the area of ministry. Whenever possible, the pastor will have an associate participate in the interview.

BACKGROUND AND REFERENCE CHECKS

The Church will conduct reference, criminal, and civil background checks on all paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or who directly oversee and/or exert control over minors. All criminal and civil background checks will be updated periodically. Applications and the results of any screening will be kept confidential by authorized Church staff, unless otherwise required by law. All information obtained or discovered will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted if possible. These materials will be archived.

No adult members of the congregation, whether volunteer or paid workers, who have been convicted of a crime against a child or certain crimes against another adult will provide services in any Churchsponsored activity or program for children or youth (see "Automatic Worker Disqualification" section below).

EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKERS

APPROPRIATE CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Physical contact with children should be kept to a minimum, including holding children, holding hands, hugging, and any one-on-one contact between any adults and children.

Inappropriate behavior will be addressed immediately. This includes but is not limited to:

- An adult placing themselves in a position where they are alone and isolated with a child or children.
- An adult touching a minor inappropriately or asking to be touched inappropriately by a minor. In the event that a minor initiates physical contact and/or inappropriate touching, the worker must immediately inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate and remove themselves from the situation. This adult should immediately let the Staff Member who is in charge of the ministry or event and/or the Senior Pastor know about the situation.
- An adult saying, or allowing to be said, inappropriate comments or jokes.

Other inappropriate behaviors might be exhibited by:

- Inappropriate or obscene phone calls, text messages, or other communications; exhibitionism; displaying of pornographic material; or allowing minors to witness sexual activity.
- Physical discipline of a minor. Physical force shall only be used to stop a violent or physical altercation or a verbal assault that reasonably threatens to become physical, and only the minimum amount of physical force necessary shall be used.
- An inappropriate relationship between a minor and adult. If you suspect this may be occurring, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority. Depending on the level of the relationship and the circumstances, an inappropriate relationship could also constitute child abuse, which must be reported to state officials.
- Meeting in isolated environments with a child or youth for counseling.

Children and youth workers are not to go into a child's home during visitation or when picking them up for Church if a parent is not home.

ALL counseling is to be done according to the official counseling policies of the Church. Failure to do so could result in personal liability and false accusations.

See also age-specific guidelines below for further information about physical contact when working with children.

Workers against whom an accusation of improper behavior is made will be placed on administrative leave pending both the internal and external investigations (when appropriate). If allegations are determined to be baseless or false, the worker will be eligible for reinstatement at the discretion of the pastoral leadership. If the behavior is such that there is any reasonable suspicion of physical or sexual abuse of a child, appropriate legal action and, if necessary, Church discipline procedures will be followed. See section later in this policy for appropriate handling of alleged sexual or physical abuse.

AUTHORIZATION AND CONSENT

All Church outings and activities, as well as transportation to and from those activities, must be approved by a member of the pastoral staff. These activities must be documented on the official Church calendar.

Parents must be kept informed about and involved in their child's activities. Parents or legal guardians must sign authorization and consent forms for all activities that take minors off the Church campus.

Transportation for Church-related activities will be provided by authorized Church personnel only. If and when multiple vehicles are used, they are to stay together as a group, following the directions of the Church's authorized coordinator. If any adult other than authorized Church personnel is asked to drive, you make yourself personally liable as well as the Church.

AUTOMATIC WORKER DISQUALIFICATION

No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control over minors who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or is presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors:

- Any offense against minors as defined by state law.
- A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug-related offenses, family violence, or any crime similar in nature to the foregoing.

GENERAL SUPERVISION PROCEDURES

TWO-ADULT RULE

- At least two previously screened volunteer or staff adults, preferably unrelated, must be present in all children's classrooms and nurseries as well as at Church activities, including transportation to and from an activity. This includes activities on-site as well as off the Church property.
- All volunteers for events and classes must be approved in advance by the leader of the organization sponsoring the activity. If a scheduled volunteer is unable to attend an event at the last minute, only pre-approved and properly screened volunteers may provide supervision.
- If a child initiates a private conversation with an adult without parental approval, a second adult, preferably of the same gender as the child, should be present. If this is not possible, the door to the room must be left open, with another adult nearby.
- If adequate supervision is not available, activities will be cancelled.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH

Ministry staff workers are prohibited from emailing, texting, initiating or accepting social media invitations, chatting, or sending private messages through apps or social media sites or otherwise to children or teens with whom they work at the Ministry. Any communications must be sent to a group rather than to individuals, or messages should be communicated through parents or guardians. Any messages sent to children/teens must also be sent to parents at the same time.

CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

All teachers and workers will use the following disciplinary measures. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the teacher or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is (e.g., for young children, "We do not throw the blocks. We use blocks for building."). If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from other students. If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps are taken, the child's parents or legal guardians should be contacted. If they are not available, the child may be taken to the children's ministry director and left under his or her supervision along with another adult. **No corporal discipline is to be used at any time.** If isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be recorded on a disciplinary incident form and discussed with the child's parents or guardian as soon as possible.

The Church does not tolerate assault, threats, harassment, or abuse against Church personnel or students. Verbal or written threats, racial/ethno-cultural harassment, physical and/or sexual harassment, or abuse perpetrated by anyone in the Church is unacceptable. The Church supports efforts designed to protect the welfare of staff and students. In dealing with matters of alleged assault, threats, harassment or abuse, the dignity and rights of all are to be preserved and respected. The Church is to be characterized by a safe and harmonious working environment in which the needs and well-being of every individual is paramount.

Violent behavior shall not be tolerated and will be dealt with accordingly:

1. Students under the age of twelve:

Where children in this age group are behaving in a violent manner and are non-responsive to instruction telling them to stop their behavior, staff members shall use the minimum amount of force necessary to prevent injury to persons or property within the vicinity of the violent person(s). The parents of the child must be involved in any action plan for remediation. The decision to report to the police will be made by the senior pastor or his designee unless the incident could constitute abuse of any kind, in which case it becomes a mandatory reporting situation. The staff member is to immediately report to the pastoral staff and the appropriate state agency any incidents involving abuse, sexual assault, serious injury, and serious damage.

2. Students twelve or older:

For young people ages 12–17, any violent incident that may be considered criminal shall be reported to the police as required by state law or, if not required by law, at the discretion of the pastoral staff. Students who are 18 years or over are considered adults, and the procedures of the state criminal code will be followed if these persons are charged and/or tried for criminal activities.

Any violent behavior, whether or not it is reported to the police, is to be reported to the pastoral staff and recorded by the staff member on an incident report containing a description of the violent incident, a reference to any call made to the police and, if applicable, reference to any disciplinary response. This information, together with any letters to the student and/or parent/guardian, must be filed in the Church office.

OPEN CLASSROOMS

Classroom doors must be left fully open if one adult needs to leave the room temporarily and before both adults are present. Paid staff or volunteers speaking to a minor or minors one-on-one should be in sight of other adults. Under no circumstance should any adult worker, paid or volunteer, ever be alone with a child not his own in any closed classroom, restroom, vehicle, closet, or other area.

Classrooms or childcare rooms will be visited without prior notice by Church staff or other Church workers (e.g., children's ministry director). The children's ministry director or his designee will conduct brief observations of childcare rooms and classrooms of children or youth during classroom times and other meeting hours.

DRIVING POLICIES

The designated leader of a Church event must know each person designated to provide transportation to or from Church. The driver must:

- Be at least 18 years old;
- Have a valid state driver's license, qualified for the vehicle being operated;
- Have no record of convictions for the past five years for drunk driving, driving under the influence, driving with a suspended or revoked license, or reckless endangerment;
- Have proof of insurance; and
- Never be alone in a vehicle with a child not his/her own.

GIFTS

No staff, either paid or volunteer, are to give personal gifts to individual children or young people without the prior knowledge of the parent(s) or responsible leadership. Because gift-giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, it should be done on a group basis or for special occasions only. Gifts may not be elaborate but should be modest and appropriate to the occasion.

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

Situations where staff members are taking children or young people out of the area for long periods of time or for overnight outings are to be carefully planned. Only known, proven staff will be permitted to sponsor/chaperone the trips. Under no circumstance will one adult be allowed to take children or youth on an overnight outing. At least two adults must be present in each sleeping area.

CLOSING

Youth and childcare workers must make sure no child is locked in a building after planned Church activities.

AGE-SPECIFIC CHILDCARE GUIDELINES

NURSERY

- A minimum of two previously screened female volunteers or staff must be present in each nursery regardless of how few children are in attendance. Workers may not leave until all children have been picked up if doing so would leave only one adult in the room.
- The windows of the nursery must remain uncovered to allow a clear view of all activities. In nurseries or classrooms with no windows, the top half of Dutch doors must remain open at all times when children are present in the room.
- Church nursery workers who change diapers must be female and must adhere to the following procedures:
 - Always use rubber gloves when changing diapers or when applying lotion.
 - Always keep a cloth or wipe between her hand and the child.
- Only female workers may take children to the restroom. The restroom door should be left open, if possible, so the nursery worker can stand in the doorway, enabling her to supervise the child

using the restroom, as well as maintaining a posture that would safeguard the worker against any accusations.

- If possible, avoid directly assisting older-aged children who may have wet or soiled their clothes. Endeavor to instruct them on how to clean themselves without your direct assistance (as frustrating as that may be). You may hand the children what they need, but do not directly clean or wash the older-aged child whenever possible.
- Avoid helping young children with zippers or skirts/pants/shorts whenever possible.
- Only assigned workers are allowed to stay in the nursery or to be in the nursery area during services or other sessions.
- Children will only be released to parents at the nursery entry using the system in place for dropoff and release. Any persons other than the child's parents or guardians, including other family members, must have written authorization to pick up the child. Such permission must be kept on file with the nursery coordinator.
- A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. Corporal discipline is never allowed.

PRESCHOOL MINISTRY

- A minimum of two previously screened volunteers or staff adults must be present with each group of children, regardless of how few children are in attendance. Workers may not leave until all children have been picked up if doing so would leave only one adult in the room.
- The windows of classroom doors and between classrooms must remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
- When possible, children should be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, the outer bathroom door must remain ajar while the teacher assists the child.
- Avoid helping young children with zippers or skirts/pants/shorts whenever possible.
- Children will only be released to parents at the door of the classroom using the system in place for drop-off and release. Persons other than the children's parents or guardians, including other family members, must have written authorization to pick up a child. Children whose parents are not present or unable to pick their children up should be escorted to a designated seating location in the Auditorium, and they should be left in the care of the Children's Church workers.
- When children are taken out of the classroom (playground, etc.), teachers are to count the children to ensure all are present.
- Only assigned workers are permitted to be in preschool rooms during sessions.
- A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. Corporal discipline is never allowed.
- The pastor or one delegated by him must approve any children's activities that are held off-site. Written parental permission must be secured for off-site activities, and there must be a minimum of two previously screened volunteers or staff adults present. All children's activities, whether on or off the Church campus, must be scheduled on the official Church calendar.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY (FIRST THROUGH SIXTH GRADES)

- A minimum of two previously screened adult volunteer or staff workers must be present with each group of children regardless of how few children are in attendance. Workers may not leave until all children have been picked up if doing so would leave one adult in the room.
- The windows of classroom doors and between classrooms must remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.

- When possible, children will be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, the outer bathroom door must remain ajar while the teacher assists the child.
- A positive approach to discipline must be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help children function appropriately. Corporal discipline is never allowed.
- The pastor or one delegated by him must approve any children's activities that are held off-site. Written parental permission must be secured for off-site activities, and there must be a minimum of two previously screened volunteers or staff adults present. All children's activities, whether on or off the Church campus, must be scheduled on the official Church calendar.

TEEN MINISTRY (SEVENTH GRADE THROUGH AGE 17)

- A minimum of two previously screened volunteers or staff adults must be present, regardless of how few students are in attendance.
- Organized events on or off the Church campus must be staffed with a minimum of 1 adult to every 10 students.
- The pastor or one delegated by him must be informed in advance of any youth activities that are held off-site. Written parental permission must be secured for off-site activities, and there must be a minimum of two previously screened volunteers or staff adults present. All youth activities, whether on or off the Church campus, must be scheduled on the official Church calendar.
- Overnight events that are attended by students of both genders must also be chaperoned by adults of both genders. Boys and girls must have separate sleeping areas, and at least two adults of the same gender as the students must be present in each sleeping area.
- A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help students function appropriately. Corporal discipline is never allowed.
- It is recognized that certain counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adults and that the general guidelines for supervision of workers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. However, such counseling should only take place in a room where interior windows allow a clear view of the activities in the room.

REPORTING PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL CHILD ABUSE

If the Church receives an allegation of child abuse, it will respond with the utmost concern to the victim, parent, or other party making such an allegation. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. Without clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, the Church personnel will assume that such complaints are made in good faith. Persons making such complaints should have no doubt that the Church takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

When reasonable suspicion of child abuse (of whatever kind) exists, the protection of the child(ren) must be the most important concern. In Missouri, it is the legal responsibility of any person who reasonably suspects child abuse to immediately report their suspicions to law enforcement and the local DSS office. Failure to report is not only a crime, but also could lead to further harm to the child and potentially other children, as well as further liability on the part of the Church, the observer, or both. If a worker informs the Church leadership about his or her suspicions and the Church leadership determines that the incident does not need to be reported, the worker still has an obligation to report the situation if he or she still believes reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect exists. Reasonable suspicion means that there is credible evidence of, or a discrepant or inconsistent history in explaining, a child's suspected abuse.

A report based on reasonable suspicion does not require proof and is not a determination that abuse or neglect has actually occurred or that the reporter witnessed the incident in question; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the child's condition.

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE:

- 1. Treat each allegation of child abuse seriously and attempt to ensure the safety and protection of persons who may have been harmed.
- 2. Immediately begin documenting all procedures observed in handling the allegation.
- 3. Immediately notify the Senior Pastor.
- 4. If the pastoral staff member believes that reasonable suspicion of child abuse exists, he and the original staff member must together notify the appropriate state agency of the allegation. If making a call together, tell the agency phone representative that both staff members are making the call. Keep in mind that even if the pastoral staff concludes that there is no reason to believe that abuse has occurred or will occur, if the original staff member who heard of or suspected the abuse still believes there is reasonable suspicion of abuse, that staff member is obligated to report the incident to the appropriate state agency. Also note that informing a superior or pastoral staff member does not relieve the mandatory reporter of his or her legal responsibility to report.
- File a written or on-line report with the appropriate reporting agency if possible.

We believe it is every adult's responsibility to keep kids safe

- Trust your gut and call the hotline number: 1-800-392-3738
- If you suspect something, please call the hotline... remember it is not an accusation that someone is guilty... let the experts determine if abuse is occurring or not. Hotline calls are anonymous.
- Take the Mandated Reporter Online training to learn more: www.protectmokids.com
- Attend a Stewards of Children training to learn the 5 steps to protecting children from sexual abuse
- Call the police if the danger is immediate or if the hotline reports they cannot investigate

These policies have been adopted by Fulton Bible Baptist Church and will be put into policy immediately. Additionally, all childcare volunteers and staff will be trained on this material.

Representative of I	Deacon Boarc	J	 	
Printed Name			 	_
Date	/	/		
Pastor			 	
Printed Name			 	_
Date	_/	/		

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY WORKER ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM Fulton Bible Baptist Church

I have received a copy of Fulton Bible Baptist Church ("Church") Child Protection Policy and agree to the following:

- to become familiar with all information contained therein
- to comply with the information contained herein
- to do whatever I can to prevent the sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and neglect of children in all Church-related functions
- to report any instances of abuse or neglect of which I become aware or about which I become suspicious
- to report any violations of the Church's child protection policy

I understand that these policies are the property of the Church.

These guidelines have been designed to guide and assist you when working with children and youth. The information establishes general practices and guidelines and should not be construed in any way as a contract of employment or continued employment, or to establish any legal relationship with the Church or any associated entity. The Church reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this program and to implement those changes with or without notice.

Signature _____

Printed Name_____

Date _____/ ____/