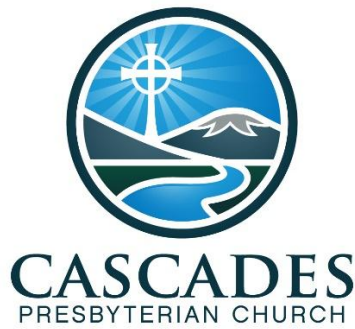




SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

Revised and Reviewed by Session November 2022

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Mark 10:14

PURPOSE

The purpose of Cascades Presbyterian Church’s Safe Church Policies is to implement and maintain a safe environment for children, youth, and adults that will help them participate freely in the church’s ministries and programs. Our goal is for all of God’s children to feel the welcome and love of Jesus Christ.

We are a Church that is growing in Christ. This growth is anticipated with increased attendance in Sunday Worship, increased number of children in the nursery, increased number of children attending Sunday school, and increased number of youth attending youth group and retreats.

In order to respond and minister to these children, youth, and vulnerable adults we call upon the generous giving of time and energy from many volunteers. As we minister, we are entrusted with their safety and well-being. Cascades Presbyterian Church must ensure our programs are conducted in a safe and sensible manner for all participants.

This policy has been developed to ensure the protection of our children, youth, vulnerable adults, staff and volunteers. The Session feels that following this policy will prevent easy access to children, prevent opportunities for accidents, and protect the church as well as its volunteers.

The first step toward protecting our children, youth, vulnerable adults, staff and volunteers is preventing problems from developing. Through adherence to this policy, congregation awareness and volunteer training, we endeavor to avoid problems from developing. This policy extends to all paid staff, members of the congregation, volunteers and community members who minister to our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

STATEMENT

It is the policy of Cascades Presbyterian Church of Vancouver, WA that sexual misconduct by church professionals, employees, volunteers, or any others serving in the name of the church or on behalf of any church-related organizations or entities, whether or not such conduct is on church premises, is not permitted.

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

Revised and Reviewed by Session November 2022

Sexual misconduct is a breach of Christian ethical principles by the misuse of trust, authority, or power relationship to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, or unjust manner. In the case of a church professional (whether they are in pastoral, counseling, or other such relationships), no personal sexual relationship, either public or private, is permitted with anyone with whom the individual has professional relationship. It is always the responsibility of a church officer or church worker to maintain appropriate sexual boundaries and limitations to ensure that sexual misconduct does not occur.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- 1) **Protect Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults.** Our intent is to provide a safe environment for all of God's children to learn, grow, and experience God's love. We believe that effective ministry requires relationships with trustworthy, caring, loving, and mature people who can demonstrate God's love to them. These safety policies are intended to keep these relationships and all aspects of ministries safe.
- 2) **Protect Adults and Leaders.** When adults and leaders are interacting with children, youth, and vulnerable adults they need to be in a safe place as well. Our intent is to create an environment that sets appropriate guidelines and boundaries and to provide the support that staff and volunteers need to be effective in their ministry roles. It is also important that leaders remain accountable to other leaders and parents, by peer observation and mandatory reporting protocols, possibly involving law enforcement.
- 3) **Provide Trustworthy Role Models.** All minors deserve to have trustworthy adults as mentors, role models and guides. We believe that only through the development of trusting relationships will our children and youth feel safe and comfortable allowing them to grow into the individuals God has called them to be.

All vulnerable areas and programs will incorporate these policies into all activities involving minors, and provide training for staff and volunteers working with children and youth, and vulnerable adults communicate clear expectations for parents, children, and youth about adhering to the policies and procedures to keep minors safe.

APPLICABILITY

The policies apply to all activity occurring on Cascades Presbyterian Church premises and during Church-sanctioned activities off the Church grounds. It also applies to outside organizations using the Church building, who must either abide by these policies at their own cost or provide us with their safe policies.

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

Revised and Reviewed by Session November 2022

GENERAL DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are to clarify the Safe Church policies and procedures:

- **Church Staff-** Includes all personnel on the payroll of Cascades Presbyterian Church, whether lay or clergy.
- **Volunteer-** Includes any unpaid person who provides a church related service.
- **Worker-** Anyone doing work for the church paid or unpaid.
- **Child-** Anyone from birth through fifth grade.
- **Youth-** Anyone from sixth grade through high school graduation.
- **Vulnerable Adult-** Anyone who may or may not have the ability to protect themselves mentally, spiritually, or physically from any kind of abuse.
- **Abuse-** This includes all improper treatment of children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Abuse used in this document includes, but is not limited to the following types:
 - **Physical abuse-** non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
 - **Verbal abuse-** the use of words to cause harm to the person being spoken to. Verbal abuse may consist of shouting, insulting, intimidating, threatening, shaming, demeaning, or derogatory language, among other forms of communication.
 - **Sexual abuse-** any contact or interaction between a child, youth, or vulnerable adult and another person when the child, youth, or vulnerable adult is being exploited for sexual gratification of such person, regardless of whether the exploitation involves touching by the person, and regardless of whether the child, youth, or vulnerable adult consents to the exploitation. Or any conduct which violates Washington State criminal statute on child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse.
 - **Sexual conduct** – any contact that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another such as adultery; offensive, obscene, or suggestive language; seductive behavior; or inappropriate/unwelcome physical or visual contact.
 - **Sexual harassment** – includes sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature in which submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or church-relationship status or in which such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or church-relationship environment.
 - **Emotional abuse-** mental or emotional injury to a child, youth or vulnerable adult that results in an observable and material impairment in that person's growth, development or psychological functioning.
 - **Pornographic Images** – sexually suggestive images of youth or children. Any image, which violates Washington State criminal statute on child and youth pornography or abuse.
 - **Neglect-** the failure to provide for a child, youth, or vulnerable adult's basic needs or the failure to protect them from harm.

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

Revised and Reviewed by Session November 2022

SAFE CHURCH COMPONENTS

The five components for ensuring a safe church are: screening, training, supervision, responding, and accountability.

All staff and volunteers are expected to do everything reasonably possible to provide a safe environment for all people. These instructions, although not an exhaustive list, are practical actions that can be taken.

1) Screening

All employees and volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall be screened prior to employment or volunteer service. All employees and volunteers eighteen years of age and older, who may have direct contact with children or youth must comply with Washington State's screening requirements before being allowed to serve. Screening will include a criminal background check, Volunteer Application and reference checks. At least two references will be contacted when processing every worker's or volunteer's initial application. All information provided for and obtained shall be retained by Cascades Presbyterian Church. Any relevant background information will be reported to the supervising staff. Employment and volunteer work will be contingent upon background checks before being allowed to serve.

Everyone who is subject to background checks will be rescreened every three years. They will also be required to repeat the MinistrySafe training module on the same schedule as their background checks. All session and deacon members are required to submit to a background check and take the MinistrySafe training. If session or deacon members succeed themselves, they must repeat the MinistrySafe training and be rescreened at the beginning of their new term. New session or deacon members will be screened and take the MinistrySafe training during the first two months of their term, generally in July or August. It is incumbent upon the supervising staff and/or elder to ensure that appropriate screening has been completed prior to service.

Any person who may pose a threat to children, youth vulnerable adults will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving said persons.

Employees are subject to the following employment criteria:

- Provide a resume.
- Complete an application that includes name, address, phone number, Social Security number, birth date, education, past work experience, and past experience with children. (Attachment A)
- Be interviewed by staff and Personnel committee representatives.
- Provide references.
- Authorize background checks, to be conducted by authoritative agencies, at the Church's expense.
- Read our Safe Church Policy, and sign the Participation Covenant Statement. (Attachment B)

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

Revised and Reviewed by Session November 2022

- Complete and pass the online Ministry Safe training module at the church's expense.

Program/Ministry Volunteers must comply with the following:

- All individuals who volunteer in the Sunday School Program, Vacation Bible School, Nursery, Children's Choir, Youth Group, and with vulnerable adults must be a member of, active participant of the congregation, or known to the congregation, for at least 6 months.
- Must complete the Volunteer Application and provide three personal references. (Attachment C)
- Authorize background checks, to be conducted by authoritative agencies, at the Church's expense.
- Read our Safe Church Policy and sign the Participation Covenant Statement.
- Complete and pass the online Ministry Safe training module at the church's expense.
- Report any incident of concern to the Safe Church Committee which consists of the Elders in charge of Christian Education and Personnel, and the Pastor.

2) **Training**

Workers with direct contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults are required to complete and pass the online Ministry Safe training module at the church's expense before service. Each person will receive a copy of the Safe Church Policies and attest to having read and agree to follow these policies. Safe Church Training/Review will also be given by the Church regarding this policy at the beginning of the Church School year or as needed.

3) **Supervision**

Workers who are responsible for the supervision of children or youth during ministry activities are expected to do everything possible to provide a safe environment.

This supervision will include the Two-Adult Rule, which states that there must be two adults present when supervising one or more children or youth. We encourage youth to serve as leaders of children. A youth leader, age 12 or older, may count as an adult under the Two-Adult Rule when working with an adult in a classroom or group where additional screened adults are present in the general area.

Occasionally, workers will find themselves without another adult present due to unforeseen circumstances. The following procedures should be followed.

- **Immediately inform ministry supervisor and parents/guardian.**
- **Visible location** - For any time when there is only one adult present, the group must be in a location that is visible to others with an unobstructed window, open door, etc.

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

Revised and Reviewed by Session November 2022

- **Bathroom Procedures**-Pre-school children should be escorted to the restroom. Escort will stay outside the restroom stalls and listen. Children in grades 2-6 may use restrooms without an escort, as long as they inform an adult leader where they are going. That leader should watch to ensure they return.

It is understood that having an adult taking children to the bathroom may leave one adult alone in the room with multiple children for a short period of time.

- **Physical Contact**- Respect, safety, and appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between ministry leaders and the people with whom they are ministering. The guidelines below are intended to avoid contact that is or may appear threatening or inappropriate. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children, youth, and young adults. Examples of **positive** and **appropriate** forms of affection:

- Brief hugs or side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- High-fives, hand slapping and fist bumps
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, shoulders and arms of children or youth
- Arm around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during group prayer

The following forms of affection are considered **inappropriate** with children, youth, and vulnerable adults in ministry. Many of these behaviors are used by molesters to groom victims for later molestation. Others may be considered to be sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses
- Holding children over three years old on the lap
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth
- Wrestling with children or youth
- Tickling children or youth
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth
- Any form of unwanted affection

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

Revised and Reviewed by Session November 2022

- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth outside the context of church sponsored ministry

- **Transportation**

In many instances a need will arise to transport children, youth, and vulnerable adults to, from and during church sponsored activities. In the event that transportation is necessary, the Two-Adult Rule will apply. The driver and one other adult must be in each vehicle containing any youth. Occasionally, workers will find themselves without another adult present due to unforeseen circumstances. The following procedures should be followed:

- If only one adult is present, there must be at least two youth present in the vehicle.
- If only one adult and one youth are present, the adult must contact their supervisor and the youth's parent or guardian, and the youth must contact their parent or guardian before they leave the pick-up site and must contact both the supervisor and the parent again when they arrive at the drop off site.

4) Reporting

All workers have a responsibility to report actual or suspected abuse of children, youth, or vulnerable adults, whether or not it may have occurred during church ministry activities or on church property.

First and foremost, all workers shall do whatever is necessary to ensure that the subject child, youth, vulnerable adult is safe.

If you believe that a violation of this policy on sexual misconduct has occurred, whether to you or to another person, you are to contact the pastor(s), the clerk of session, a member of the session of your congregation, an Executive Presbyter, your presbytery's regional office, a member of the presbytery's regional Committee on Ministry, or The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of the Cascades. The person notified is obliged to institute procedures for investigation of the allegation and the taking of appropriate actions.

The session of Cascades Presbyterian Church will be guided in its procedure by the "Revised Policy and Procedure on Sexual Misconduct" of the Presbytery of The Cascades in the form, style, and content of its investigation and actions. Allegations of misconduct against minister, members or agents of The Presbytery of the Cascades are handled by the presbytery. Allegations of misconduct by members, employees, or agents of a local church are handled by the session of Cascades Presbyterian Church.

The witness or reporter shall tell a supervising staff member of the abuse, using the Incident/Injury Report Form (Attachment E). The form shall be completed within 24 hours of the suspected incident.

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

Revised and Reviewed by Session November 2022

If the child, youth, or vulnerable adult **IS** in immediate danger; the volunteer or staff shall call the police first (911) and second the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to report the abuse. As soon afterward as possible, the reporter and staff shall complete the Abuse Incident Report Form to the best of their ability. Staff shall report the incident to the Pastor and the Safe Church Committee, which will do what is necessary from that point.

If the child, youth, or vulnerable adult is **NOT** in immediate danger, the witness or reporter shall tell staff, who will assist in the completion of the Incident Report Form (Attachment E). Staff shall report the incident to the Senior Pastor and the Chair of the Safe Church Committee. The Committee will determine whether the incident requires the intervention of DSHS or whether the incident is a minor infraction of church policy. Appropriate steps will be taken to involve DSHS, if necessary.

If the incident is a minor infraction, the supervising staff will talk with the subject and remind them of the Safe Church Policies. The conversation will be noted on the Incident Report Form (Attachment E), which will be retained on file. If a second minor infraction occurs, the worker shall be suspended from working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults throughout the church. The supervisor and the Safe Church Committee shall determine the length of suspension. Should a third minor infraction occur, the subject shall not be able to return as staff or volunteer with children, youth, or vulnerable adults with Cascades Presbyterian Church indefinitely.

5) Accountability

Everyone involved with children, youth, and vulnerable adults are responsible for making sure that the Safe Church Policies are understood and followed. The Safe Church Committee is responsible for evaluating how well these policies and guidelines are being followed and providing the ongoing training and support necessary to make sure they are implemented consistently. Any person who has any information regarding a person failing to comply with the Safe Church Policy shall immediately report such information to the Chair of the Safe Church Committee and another Safe Church Committee Member

RESPONSIBILITIES

Ministers

Ministers are governed by the Presbytery Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy and other Presbytery policies. In addition to conforming to Presbytery policy, ministers will be aware of all policies outlined here and will support staff and volunteers in their implementation. Ministers will also provide guidance and pastoral care in cases of suspected or actual abuse. In addition, when individuals fail to pass the screening criteria for working with others, the pastor will be informed. The pastor will make sure that key staff members are informed that such persons are not approved to have any contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults involved in church programs and activities.

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

Revised and Reviewed by Session November 2022

Session

Session will be responsible for ensuring that all Presbytery and Safe Church Policies are followed. Specifically, the session is responsible for:

- Appointing members of the Safe Church Committee and having the Safe Church Committee report at least annually on the effectiveness of Safe Church policies and practices.
- Ensuring, through the Safe Church Committee and Personnel Committee, that all elders, employees, and other church volunteers have received and read these policies and participate in the online Ministry Safe training module.
- Providing the funds and resources necessary for carrying out the Safe Church Policies.

Ministry Areas

All Ministry areas will work with the Safe Church Committee to make sure that Safe Church policies are implemented. Ministry areas with programs or activities involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be responsible for:

- Training their volunteers on the specific rules and procedures for supervision and safety in their Ministry Area.
- Communicating clear expectations for behavior with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Safe Church Committee

The Safe Church Committee will oversee the implementation and compliance of policies related to the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The Committee shall contain both genders. It shall consist of the Christian Education Elder, the Pastor and Personnel Elder. The Committee shall undergo Safe Church Policy training.

Safe Church Committee must comply with the following

- Developing and implementing a confidential screening process for workers and making sure that anyone involved in the screening process receives the training and support necessary to handle screening information and maintenance of records in a confidential, legal, and ethical manner.
- Working with ministry areas to deliver training to staff and volunteers.
- Working with ministry areas, church staff, and the Personnel Committee to support the implementation of Safe Church policies and procedures.
- Reviewing and approving Safe Church procedures on a yearly basis.
- Promoting Safe Church principles throughout the church.
- Reporting to Session on an annual basis about the effectiveness of the Safe Church policies and practices.
- Ensure that all staff/volunteers within the program have complied with the requirements of this policy.
- "Two Adult Rule." A minimum of two adults is required for all program activities. Ensure that at no time are adults and minors one-on-one in isolated places on or off church property. If an emergency exists and this section cannot be complied with, the Safe Church Committee must be alerted. An exception to the Two Adult provision of this policy may be granted if the child's parents provide approval.
- Within the nursery, ensure that an identification system, linking parent and child is followed in accordance with the Nursery Policy and Procedures.

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

Revised and Reviewed by Session November 2022

- Ensure that all persons driving children and youth as part of a field trip have supplied a copy of their driver's licenses and auto liability insurance.
- Ensure all children and youth participating in a field trip supply written permission from authorized parent or guardian. (Attachment D)
- Report an incident or inappropriate behavior to the Session. (Attachment E)
- Ensure that permission slips are obtained for any children and youth appearing in published photographs, videotapes, voice recordings or any other likenesses used outside of Worship Service. (Attachment D)

References

Presbytery of the Cascades Sexual Misconduct Policy. Revised 1998. Presbytery of the Cascades. Accessed September 23, 2011

<http://www.cascadespresbytery.org/SexualMisconductPolicy.pdf>

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Washington State Legislature Statute RCW 9A.44.093, Sexual misconduct with a minor in the first degree, Washington State Legislature. Accessed October 16, 2014

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=9A.44.093>