

Child Safety Policy

Black Mountain Presbyterian Church

Black Mountain, North Carolina

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Introduction

Theology

“And Jesus took a child and put him in the midst of them;
and taking the child in his arms, he said to them,
‘Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.’”

Adapted from Mark 9:36-37, RSV.

The congregation of Black Mountain Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy reflects our congregation’s commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

In keeping with the covenant of baptism, we commit ourselves and our resources to the nurture, care and protection of our children. We pledge to intentionally provide the structure, education, and policies that will keep them safe from harm and abuse.

In making these promises we confess the tragic reality that churches have not always been safe places for children. Sexual abuse and exploitation can occur in all faith communities, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. We believe any abuse of a child is intolerable, and thus we must confess our complicity when we are tempted to believe “it can’t happen here”.

By establishing and implementing this policy, we not only seek to protect our church from liability but pledge to guard the honor and reputation of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the head of the church. In the guidelines and procedures that follow, we intend to reflect the love and hospitality we have come to know in Jesus the Christ.

Definitions

In order to ensure that a nurturing Christian environment for children/youth is maintained within the congregation, to protect children/youth who participate in activities sponsored by the church from sexual, mental, and/or physical abuse, and to protect the congregation’s members from false allegations of abuse, this policy uses the following definitions:

1. **Child Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the congregation’s children/youth shall not violate that responsibility by causing physical injury, which is non-accidental; mental injury, which is non-accidental; sexual abuse or serious physical neglect of children/youth; or any other act described as child abuse by North Carolina law.
2. **Sexual Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the congregation’s children/youth shall not violate that responsibility by having any interaction with a child/youth where the child/youth is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult or a third person regardless of whether or not the behavior involves touching, or any other act described as sexual abuse in North Carolina law.

3. **Sexual Harassment Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the congregation's children/youth shall not violate that responsibility by engaging in sexual harassment. Sexual Harassment is defined by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Child or Youth – any person considered a minor under the laws of the State of North Carolina that is, a person who is under 18 years of age. The age of consent for sexual activity in NC is 16.

Pastor – an installed Minister of Word and Sacrament; also known as Teaching Elder

Child Protection Committee (CPC) – elected group of persons which implements and enforces the Child Safety Policy, and reports directly to Christian Education Ministry Team.

Approved Adult – anyone over 21 years of age who has satisfied the training and screening requirements of the Child Safety Policy, including a background check. An Approved Adult is authorized to provide overnight and off-site supervision of children in accordance with the terms of this policy.

Approved Adult positions include, but are not limited to:

Church staff, weekday school staff, nursery staff, youth ministry team members and overnight chaperones, Logos ministry team, Sunday School floaters, confirmation covenant partners, CPC members, CE ministry team.

Volunteer – anyone over 21 years of age who provides short-term supervision of children under the direction of an Approved Adult. Ordinarily, volunteers are not authorized to provide overnight and off-site supervision of children. However, in extraordinary circumstances, the Child Protection Committee is authorized to provide a short term waiver of the screening and training requirements for Approved Adults so that a volunteer who otherwise complies with the Approved Adult requirements may provide overnight and off-site supervision of children. Any such short term waiver shall be issued in writing by the Chair of the CPC or a designee of the Chair, with the approval of the CPC.

Youth Volunteer – anyone 21 or less years of age who provides short-term supervision of younger children and youth, under the supervision of an Approved Adult. Ordinarily, Youth Volunteers are not authorized to provide overnight and off-site supervision of children. However, in extraordinary circumstances, the Child Protection Committee is authorized to provide a short term waiver of the screening and training requirements for Approved Adults so that a mature Youth Volunteer who otherwise complies with the Approved Adult requirements may provide overnight and off-site supervision of children.

Any such short term waiver shall be issued in writing by the Chair of the CPC or a designee of the Chair, with the approval of the CPC.

Purpose, Applicability and Scope

1. Purpose

- a. To provide a safe and secure environment for children and youth at BMPC
- b. To protect children and youth from sexual, physical, and emotional abuse while participating in BMPC activities
- c. To guide BMPC as an institution in the conduct of its employees and volunteers and to prevent incidents and allegations of child abuse
- d. To protect volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse

2. Applicability

This policy addresses four (4) components of children and youth protection:

- a. Screening of applicants for employment and volunteer service for a history of behavior potentially detrimental to children and youth
- b. Training of employees and volunteers in children and youth protection
- c. Reporting of incidents of abuse/neglect/dependency
- d. Responding to incidents of abuse/neglect/dependency

This policy applies to all persons, whether BMPC employees or volunteers, participating in all children and youth programs of BMPC, including but not limited to:

Children's Programs – 0 to 5th Grade:

- Nursery/Extended Session
- Sunday School
- Weekday School
- Logos
- Children's Choirs

Youth Programs – 6th to 12th Grade:

- Youth Group
- Sunday School
- Mission Trips/Retreats/Conferences
- Fellowship Events

All employees of BMPC are governed by this policy, which supersedes all prior BMPC child protection policy statements. With regard to any employee(s) of BMPC, perceived conflicts or ambiguities in interpretation and application of this policy shall be resolved by the Child Protection Committee and the Christian Education Ministry Team. With regard to any volunteer(s) of BMPC, perceived conflicts or ambiguities in interpretation and application of this policy shall be resolved by the Child Protection Committee.

3. Scope

- a. All employees and volunteers shall abide by the policy.
- b. An individual may be terminated from employment and/or volunteer service for failure to abide by this policy. This action may be taken regardless of the outcome of any investigation if the Child Protection Committee determines that the Child Protection Policy and procedures have not been followed.
- c. Individuals who fail to follow the procedures listed in this policy place themselves at risk for accusations of child abuse.
- d. The possibility of being accused of child or youth abuse, whether true or false, is a risk each employee and volunteer faces when working with the children at BMPC. Each person must assume responsibility for his/her own actions in working with children and youth and for attending training offered on child and youth protection.

Screening and Administration

The Child Protection Committee (CPC)

The CPC shall consist of five members: the senior Pastor or other staff member designated by the Session, one Session designee, one Christian Education designee, one Personnel Committee designee, and one at-large designee who is church member and a parent or legal guardian of a child who participates in BMPC events. One of these members shall serve as the Child Protection Committee Chair. All members of the committee will be approved by the Christian Education Ministry team and by the Session.

The Committee will:

1. Implement and enforce this Child Safety Policy
2. Review and make recommendations to the Christian Education ministry team for revising Child Safety Policy
3. Provide training for all staff and approved adults working with the children/youth regarding child safety, child abuse and the Child Safety Policy
4. Maintain a list of Approved Adults and disseminate the list within the church community
5. Monitor Staff Members, Approved Adults, and Volunteers to ensure that policies are being followed
6. Keep the CE committee apprised of all activities of the committee
7. Receive reports of any and all investigations regarding child abuse
8. Review all applications for Approved Adults

9. Supervise clearances for all Approved Adults. (All background checks go directly to Pastor, and Pastor will consult CPC chair regarding any noteworthy background checks.) In addition, the Committee may evaluate whether in extraordinary circumstances, short-term waivers of the screening and training requirements applicable to approved adults, may be issued to any Volunteers who otherwise meet the approved adult requirements.
10. Review each clearance every five years
11. Receive and process reports of suspected abuse
12. Make available, upon request of an individual, his/her clearance reports
13. Annual Review of Child Safety Policy
14. General education on child safety for congregation

The CPC Chair will:

1. Ensure that required forms are received for all applicants and proper records are maintained
2. Call meetings as often as needed, but no less than once each year

Screening of Employees

1. Personal interviews, personal and professional references, employment records will be required for all employees of BMPC. Criminal background checks will be done on employees who work directly with children or youth, and may be required for other employees at the direction of the CPC.
2. Interviews, reference checks, employment records, criminal background checks on employees are to be documented in writing. These records are confidential church property. They will not be released to any party except with the written approval of the Pastor and Chair of the CPC. They will be made available to the employee, but not a candidate for employment, if a written request is made to the CPC.
3. All current and potential employees will be required to sign an Employee and Volunteer Agreement agreeing to follow the policies and procedures of BMPC pertaining to child and youth protection. This Agreement is a supplement to the personnel application, and is maintained in the employee's personnel file.
4. Any candidate for employment who has a past conviction or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse/neglect/dependency cannot be employed by BMPC without the express written approval of the Personnel Committee and approved by the Session. The Personnel Committee, in consultation with the CPC, will consider the available information related to the circumstances of the situation in order to make a determination about the employment of the individual in question. Notwithstanding the above, a criminal conviction related to any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from employment with children or youth: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, child pornography, and abuse of a minor.

Screening of Approved Adults

1. Background checks will be done on all BMPC Approved Adults at the direction of the CPC. These background checks shall be repeated every five (5) years.
2. Information from Approved Adult application forms and background checks on Approved Adults will be reviewed by the Pastor and will be held confidentially.
3. All Approved Adults involved with children or youth must have been members of the congregation or the Presbytery for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment. Any exceptions must be approved by the CPC.
4. All current and potential Approved Adults will be required to sign an Employee and Volunteer Agreement. This Agreement is maintained in the notebook of volunteer forms.
5. Approved Adults shall agree to attend and complete any required training as directed by the CPC or the Session.
6. Any candidate for Approved Adult service who has a past conviction or pending proceeding, addressing an allegation of child abuse/neglect/dependency, cannot work with children and youth at BMPC. Express written approval of the CPC which will consider the available information related to the circumstances of the situation in order to make a determination about the individual in question will be required. Notwithstanding the above, a criminal conviction related to any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from volunteer service with children and youth: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, child pornography, and abuse of a minor. Information from background checks will be reviewed by the CPC for approval. If the person is denied volunteer service, this information will be reviewed with the applicant by the Chair of the CPC. The applicant may within 30 days appeal in writing the decision to the CPC to the Session.

Required Forms for Approved Adults

1. A completed Approved Adult Application
2. A signed Employee and Volunteer Agreement
3. A completed criminal and/or civil background check from an approved agency
4. Letter of Acceptance as an Approved Adult

Required Forms for Volunteers in case of off-site and overnight programs

1. A signed volunteer agreement that one has read the child safety policy and agrees to abide by it
2. An information form

Retention and Confidentiality of records of Staff Members and Approved Adults

The Required Forms and related material for Staff Members and Approved Adults will be locked in a confidential file under the jurisdiction of the CPC chair and the Senior Pastor (or other designated Staff Person). The Required Forms will be maintained by the Senior Pastor (or other designated Staff Person). In the case of an appeal of a prospective approved adult, these records will only be available to the Senior Pastor (or other designated Staff Person), members of the CPC, and to the Session.

Guidelines for Working with Children and Youth

Two Adults Rule

Two Approved Adults should be present during any church sponsored children/youth activity. In some instances, a designated adult will circulate outside the classroom area or be within easy reach to provide assistance if needed. In a mixed group, whenever possible, a male and a female Approved Adult should be present. Any adult should attempt to avoid circumstances that cause them to be alone with a child/youth. All interactions should be interruptible and observable.

Visibility

All activities/meetings with children/youth must be conducted in a way that allows visibility. (E.g., glass areas of doors should not be obstructed, curtains/blinds should be open, when possible, door should be open or a window should allow easy observation of the room.) Where possible, conduct activities in a public place, with another person within sight and sound of the activities.

Because abuse is sometimes perpetuated by an older, stronger child/youth, do not send two children/youth with a four or more year age difference to an isolated setting. (E.g., bathroom, tent, empty classroom)

Bathroom and Diapering:

In general, children should be encouraged to use the bathroom before and after classes or other activities. In this way parents can assist as needed.

If you need to take a child to the toilet, be aware of your visibility and the child's privacy. (E.g., adult stands holding public bathroom door open while child enters toilet stall alone.)

Diapering: Two adults (one being an Approved Adult) must be present when clothes or diapers are being changed. The parent can also be recruited to change clothes or diapers.

Two and Three Year Olds: An Approved Adult must accompany children to and from the bathroom and inform another adult when this takes place. The adult will assist the child only when necessary. The classroom bathroom doors must remain open at all times so that children and adults assisting are always within view of another volunteer or floater.

Preschool: An Approved Adult must accompany preschoolers to the bathroom. The adult will remain outside the stall. If assistance is required, the Approved Adult should encourage independence but can assist with minimal tasks if necessary (belts, snaps, etc.). The classroom bathroom doors must remain open at all times so that children and adults assisting are always within view of another volunteer or floater.

Empty Room Policy

After an activity, check rooms to ensure that all participants have vacated the room.

Expressions of Affection

True expressions of affection toward children/youth can be a manifestation of Christ's love for all of us. A kind word of encouragement to a child/youth or a pat on the back can be a small but significant act for both the adult and the child/youth. That being said, adults must use caution and common sense when physically expressing affection toward children/youth.

- a. Respect a child's/youth's refusal of affection
- b. Be aware of appropriate hand placement. A child/youth or an observer could misinterpret a pat on the bottom or a bear hug. Note that a touch on private areas, those areas covered by a bathing suit; or a kiss on the mouth is inappropriate.
- c. Discipline of any type involving physical contact is not permitted.

Permission Slips, Overnight Activities, Transportation

1. Permission Slips: General-Children/youth must have permission to participate in activities. Parents/guardians need to fill out and sign a General permission form, which includes pertinent medical information and emergency phone numbers. These forms will be updated every year and filed in the church office. When traveling offsite copies of these forms will travel with the group.

Specific—Children/youth must have permission to participate in any overnight activity. The permission must be written, signed by a parent or guardian, dated, and must identify the activity in which the child/youth will be participating. The Pastor and/or person designated by the Pastor may waive the requirement for permission slips where a permission slip serves no useful purpose (for example when a child/youth is accompanied by his or her parent or guardian to the activity).

2. Medical Release Forms for field trips: All youth participating in a youth group or going on a field trip with any church group, must have a Medical Release Form on file before they will be allowed to participate.
 - The form must be completed by parents/guardians and returned to the event coordinator.
 - A copy of the completed form will be kept on file in the Associate Pastors or Christian Educators office.
 - Each time a field trip or overnight event occurs, a copy must be taken with an adult leader while a copy remains in the Church office.
3. Overnight Activities: Overnight activities involving children/youth shall be chaperoned by at least two Approved Adults. Boys and girls will sleep in separate areas with at least two Approved Adults of the same gender directly supervising each group.

However in extraordinary circumstances, the Child Protection Committee is authorized to provide a short term waiver of the two Approved Adults for each gender requirement when sleeping space is such that an Approved Adult of the opposite gender can provide additional coverage for the youth who has one Approved Adult of the same gender supervising them.

For example: if male and female youth are sleeping in the same room (separate areas), then one male and one female Approved Adult could provide adequate coverage. Any such short term waiver shall be issued in writing by the Chair of the CPC or a designee of the Chair, with the approval of the CPC.

4. Transportation of Children/Youth: When children/youth are transported for church activities they shall be transported in groups with at least one Approved Adult in each vehicle.
5. Personal Vehicle Transportation. To transport children/youth in a personal vehicle, the driver must be 21 years of age or older. Anyone who has had their license revoked or suspended within the past five years will be ineligible to drive for youth activities.

Nursery Protection Guidelines (See Appendix)

Classroom Protection Guidelines (See Appendix)

Reporting Child Abuse (NC requirements)

Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that a “juvenile” is abused, neglected or has died as a result of maltreatment shall report such suspected abuse or neglect to the Director of the Department of Social Services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be made orally, by telephone or in writing.

Child Protective Services, Buncombe County Social Services, 35 Woodfin St. Asheville, NC 28802. Telephone 828.250.5900, or 211, Or call Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina, 1-800-CHILDREN. They can put you in touch with someone who can offer support and help. Or contact your Family Physician or Pediatrician, Mental Health Center, Health Department or 1-800-4-A-CHILD a National Child Abuse Hotline.

Internal guidelines for reporting suspected abuse

Anyone who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child/youth under their care, guidance or supervision, or a child/youth not directly under their care, guidance or supervision but involved in any church program or activity, has been abused by anyone (including but not limited to the child/youth’s family or guardians) shall immediately inform the Pastor or the CPC chair and document the suspected abuse by completing a Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report. (See Appendix #10).

The church is not responsible for investigating or determining whether or not abuse has occurred. The standard under the law for reporting is that “a reasonable person has cause to believe the child has been abused.” It may be necessary to question the child or person alleging the abuse has occurred; this would be to clarify solely in order to determine if there is cause to believe abuse may have occurred.

Detailed interviews and extensive questioning with the child and/or the alleged abuser should be conducted by legal authorities, not the church.

If a child is injured or in pain, call 911 for an ambulance.

If any adult has reason to suspect child abuse, that person must call the local County Department of Social Services and report the abuse. (**Buncombe County DSS number 828.250.5900 or 211**)

After child protective authorities have been contacted, continue with follow-up, investigation, documentation within the church:

1. Following placement of the call to report suspected abuse to County Department of Social Services, the Child Advocate or Pastor will inform the parent (provided that neither of the custodial parents is suspected of abuse). If a custodial parent is the alleged abuser, his or her first contact about the allegation should come from either Child & Youth Services or the police, not the church.
2. The church should not enter into discussion about the details of the complaint with the alleged abuser after a report has been filed and during the course of the legal investigation. The alleged abuser will be removed from any position in which he or she has supervisory authority over children pending the completion of the investigation.
3. The insurance company and Presbytery should be contacted after the report is filed as a matter of routine practice if the alleged abuse involves a staff person. The alleged abuser will have their ministry restricted to exclude contact with children immediately; and may be placed on paid or unpaid leave for a designated period of time during the investigation
4. If an incident is reported that does not rise to the level of making a mandated report, the Child Advocate will inform the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) of the concern and document the meeting.

Information

1. The extent to which information will be shared with the congregation will be determined by the Moderator and Session and others as appropriate. The input of the General Presbyter may be sought and, if pastoral staff is involved, the WNC Presbytery Committee on Ministry may be consulted in making this decision.
2. All necessary parties will cooperate with the investigations made by the police.
3. The Session will authorize the Pastor or Session designee to act as the official spokesperson for the congregation. Only the authorized person or persons may speak for the congregation to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others.

Violations of Child Safety Policy

Persons who admit to or plead guilty to or are convicted in a court of law of any form of physical or sexual abuse of a child/youth will be immediately, permanently, and completely disqualified by the Child Protection Committee (CPC) from working with children/youth in the congregation. Persons who admit to a Pastor or any member of the CPC any type of physical or sexual abuse of a child/youth but who have not appeared in a court of law will be disqualified from working with children/youth in the congregation. Allegations of sexual or physical abuse shall disqualify any person from working with children/youth until the investigation is completed. The CPC may temporarily or permanently disqualify any person(s) from working with children/youth, as the committee deems appropriate, subject to review by the Session.

Alleged violations of the policy, other than abuse, shall be immediately reported to the CPC Chair who will report it to the Pastor and the Session, if deemed appropriate. The Child Protection Committee will investigate the alleged violations of the policy. If a person(s) is found to be in violation of the policy, the CPC will recommend disqualification or disciplinary action to the Session, if any is necessary.

Training and Supervision

In order to be an Approved Adult, one must participate in an initial training course. Refresher training will be required every five years. Teachers for this training will have education and training in issues of child abuse.

Training for staff members and volunteers working with children and youth will make use of professional training materials on recognizing and responding to child abuse. Included will be:

- Specific materials about child sexual abuse
- Behavior signs exhibited by abused children
- The grooming process that sexual offenders often use to engage children
- How to respond to a disclosure
- Familiarity with legally mandated reporting requirements and BMPC guidelines
- Use and completion of required reporting forms.

Children and Youth

Christian education on healthy physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries, including sexual abuse prevention, shall be offered in age appropriate ways. The purpose is to provide our children and teens with the opportunity to receive age-appropriate information in a faith-based context to help them to recognize inappropriate conduct on the part of an adult or older child. This should also empower them to say no, and tell a “safe adult” at church, home, or school.

Parents and other Congregants

Child Abuse Awareness education will be offered periodically for parents and other congregants. This shall include information about the spiritual, as well as psychological and physical impact of abuse.

Pastoral Care of Individuals and Families

1. Pastoral support will be offered to all parties involved in a child abuse complaint. This includes those who have made the complaint, the alleged abuser, the families of both, other persons directly affected, and the congregation. Decisions about how this support will be given will be made by pastoral staff and the Session.
2. If the allegations involve pastoral staff, the ministry of the church will need to be maintained while the issue is being addressed. Decisions regarding how this will be accomplished will be made by the Session with assistance from the Presbytery.

Our congregation acknowledges that there are many victims who may be affected by an incident or a suspicion of child abuse or neglect. We are mindful that the following persons will require the proper response, care, counseling and support following any such event:

- Family members of the harmed child, youth, or vulnerable adult
- Peers of child, youth or vulnerable adult
- Peers of the child’s or youth’s or vulnerable adult’s parents
- Remaining workers of children, youth, or vulnerable adult programs
- Congregation as a community of faith
- Family of the accused abuser

We believe that failure to address the issues of suffering, anger, fear, and grief that can occur within the church after abuse can have extended and unnecessary consequences for everyone. We will not hide or shrink away from our responsibility to promptly and appropriately address any incident of abuse. As a congregation, we are committed

to the prevention of and termination of behaviors which contribute to the cycle of abuse. The following represents the steps we will take to assure that the congregation and those affected may be restored to a feeling of well-being and justice.

- a. Truth telling is the most important component in post-loss recovery. Our communications will be honest, measured, and respectful of all parties involved. Written communication will be factual and will work to dispel rumor and innuendo. We will assure the congregation of the steps taken to secure the safety of the victim and to resume the functions of the ministries and programs.
- b. Senior clergy will host a planned congregational meeting so that members can attend to learn about the church's response to the allegation of abuse. The meeting will be led by appropriate senior clergy, lay leaders and Presbytery representatives. A non-member Counselor will be available to address attendee questions and feelings.
- c. A Task Force will be established to determine how our congregation will adapt its ongoing ministries to appropriately acknowledge and recover from the incident. Educational programs in various forums (adult, youth, and children's Sunday School programs, Thursday night programs, choirs, standing committees, staff) will be implemented to promote healing, justice, education and restored worship.
- d. The Child Protection Committee will work closely with the Task Force and clergy to modify any procedures and policies based upon incident outcomes and to diligently engage in every effort to prevent further incidents of abuse and neglect.

Response Procedures

A Response Team selected by the Pastors and Session shall provide pastoral care, including but not limited to the making of referrals, seeking of aid and care if needed, and providing comfort. Nonexclusive examples of such pastoral care may include contacting the Session to request funds to pay for counseling; providing transportation; and giving lists of appropriate professionals whose assistance might be available.

Whenever confidentiality is required under these rules and procedures, it is expressly understood that members of Response Team are subject to any requirements of the secular law. This particularly includes any requirements that sexual or physical abuse of children or incapacitated adults will be reported to appropriate authorities.

Care for the Congregation

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the work of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing songs to God. And whatever you do, in word and deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Col. 3:12-17

In our congregation we take every precaution we possibly can to protect our children; however, we have to recognize that incidents may occur. These situations can have a tremendous impact on the individuals, as well as the entire congregation. To help the community of faith deal with this betrayal of trust, there are four main components necessary for the healing process:

- Truth telling. For healing to begin the silence must be broken by acknowledging what has happened. Ignoring the issue could only make things worse.
- Sharing and validation of feelings. There are many emotions that surround the betrayal of trust: shock, anger, disbelief, and fear. In order to help the community of faith acknowledge and validate these feelings as well as find some resolution, we encourage group mediation with a trained sexual abuse pastoral counselor.
- Education. Commitment to the safety and well being of children and youth is our number one priority. We have to communicate that commitment to the congregation in order for trust to be re-established. We also must reeducate members on how collectively we can protect our children.
- Spiritual reflection. In a community of faith we turn to God for guidance and direction, especially during difficult times. We turn to Scripture, like the words Paul gave to the Colossians during crisis, or the comforting words of Psalm 23. We pray that the "peace of Christ will rule in our hearts." We turn to God in prayer and emphasize the grace of Jesus Christ that will lift us up and love us forever.

Pastoral care will help the congregation to answer questions, such as, "What else do we have to do in order to be able to heal? As a congregation and as the body of Christ, where do we go from here? What do we need to do to mend ourselves so that we can go about the mission of the church – which is to glorify and serve God?"

Appendix I: Nursery and Classroom Guidelines

NURSERY PROTECTION GUIDELINES

The nursery of Black Mountain Presbyterian Church is designed to provide a place of safety and caring for our youngest church participants, while allowing their parents to participate in worship or activities. As such, the following policy is designed to protect the children, parents and volunteers who participate:

1. Parents will complete an emergency information form when a child first enters BMPC's care and a copy of the Nursery Guidelines for Parents will also be made available. Parents will be asked to sign a statement that they have received the guidelines and have been given the opportunity to ask questions about them.
2. Parents should sign children in and out in log book each time children are delivered to care, and children will only be released to those listed on the emergency contact form.

3. Parents should label all bottles, juices, blankets, toys and any other personal belongings. Pacifiers should be attached to the child. Only dry food snacks are allowed in the nursery. Snacks containing nuts are never allowed due to allergies. Small snack items that can be choked on, such as grapes, are not permitted.
4. Discipline Plan: Limit setting is directed toward maximizing the growth and development of the children and is for protecting the group and the individuals within it. Positive reinforcement is the major tool of appropriate discipline. Volunteers will verbalize to the child when she/he is behaving in an inappropriate manner. Volunteers will redirect a child who appears to be having a hard time playing appropriately. If a child is repeatedly displaying inappropriate behavior and redirecting has not worked, the Director of Preschool Ministries will be called in for assistance, and/or the parents/guardian will be asked to come to the nursery. Nursery volunteers WILL NOT:
 - Use corporal punishment, including spanking
 - Subject children to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation or verbal abuse
 - Deny any child food as a form of punishment
 - Punish any child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
7. If a child needs to use the bathroom, an Approved Adult shall accompany him/her. The bathroom door must remain open at all times. The Approved Adult will stay outside the door and let the child use the toilet. If assistance is needed with wiping or dressing, help may be given to the child while keeping the door to the bathroom open. Encourage the child to wipe him/herself. Let the parent know that the child has used the toilet and whether or not assistance was needed. Help the child wash his/her hands thoroughly with soap and running water. Wash your own hands. If a problem arises when a child needs to use the toilet, a parent will be contacted.
8. Children must be picked up immediately following the service or church activities. Each child must be checked out in the log by a parent or a person designated on the emergency contact form.
9. After worship or other official church activities have ended, at least one parent/guardian shall remain in the church while the child is in the nursery.
10. Should an incident occur that results in physical injury, parent(s) will be notified and an incident report will be completed.

CLASSROOM PROTECTION GUIDELINES

The Black Mountain Presbyterian Church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all classroom activities. We also expect all employees and volunteers who work with minors to complete and submit an application to be an Approved Adult or volunteer.

Infants through Fifth Grade

1. Parents will complete a General Child/Youth Emergency Form when a child first enters an education classroom. Children third grade and under will only be released to those persons listed on the emergency form or sign in sheet. An adult accompanying a visiting child will sign the child in.
2. Copies of the Child Protection Guideline Summary will be made available to the parents of children.
3. In every classroom there will be at least two volunteers. An Approved Adult will be available as the hall floater. Volunteers should be at least five years older than the oldest child in their care.
4. No teacher shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for purposes of toileting, clean up from craft or art projects, or care of injury, except when necessary. In this case the door to the bathroom and classroom shall be kept open.
5. No teacher working with our children shall place him/herself in a compromising situation by being alone with a child or children out of sight of other teachers or aides.
6. Normally teachers who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom door while the child is inside. If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, the parent will be notified at pickup.
7. If for any reason, a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom, the classroom door shall remain ajar.
8. Children in grades 3-12 can use the bathrooms unescorted, provided they return within a reasonable time frame. This privilege can be granted or rescinded at the teacher's discretion.
9. When an Approved Adult takes children off the church grounds they must have the signed, written permission form from each child's parent or guardian in their possession. The copy must be kept with the teacher, and the original of the form will be kept in the Associate Pastors or Christian Educators office.
10. Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker or volunteer and a child must be reported promptly the Child Protection Policy Committee.
11. Limit setting is directed toward maximizing the growth and development of the children and for protecting the group and the individuals within it. Positive reinforcement is the major tool of appropriate disciplining. Verbalize to the child when he/she is behaving in an appropriate manner. Redirect a child who appears to be having a hard time behaving appropriately. If a child is repeatedly displaying inappropriate behavior, and redirecting has not worked, and talking to the child has not worked, then the parent will be notified. The teacher will pass on information of repeated inappropriate behavior to the Christian Educator. No one shall: use corporal punishment, including spanking, humiliation or verbal abuse.

Appendix II: Selected North Carolina Statutes on Child Abuse

A “juvenile” is defined as a person who is less than eighteen (18) years of age, is not married, emancipated or a member of the armed services.

The statute does not define the terms “abuse” or “neglect,” but instead defines “abused juveniles” and “neglected juveniles.” An “abused juvenile” is a juvenile whose parent, custodian or caretaker:

- (a) Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the juvenile a serious physical injury by other than accidental means
- (b) Creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of serious physical injury to the juvenile by other than accidental means
- (c) Uses or allows to be used upon the juvenile cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures or cruel or grossly inappropriate devices to modify behavior
- (d) Commits, permits or encourages the commission of a violation of rape, various sexual offenses, dissemination of obscene material to a juvenile, exploitation, prostitution and taking indecent liberties with the juvenile
- (e) Creates or allows to be created serious emotional damage to the juvenile
- (f) Encourages, directs or approves of delinquent acts involving moral turpitude committed by the juvenile.

Evidence of “serious emotional damage” may include “severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior toward himself or others” N.C.G.S. § 7B-101(1)(e).

Any person who in good faith makes a report of suspected child abuse, cooperates in a protective services assessment, or testifies in a judicial proceeding resulting from a protective services report or assessment is immune from any civil or criminal liability with regard to such reporting.

Definition of Caretaker – Any person other than a parent, guardian, or custodian who has responsibility for the health and welfare of a juvenile in a residential setting. A person responsible for a juvenile’s health and welfare means a stepparent, foster parent, an adult member of the juvenile’s household, an adult relative entrusted with the juvenile’s care, or any person such as a house parent or cottage parent who has primary responsibility for supervising a juvenile’s health and welfare in a residential child care facility or residential educational facility, or any employee or volunteer of a division, institution, or school operated by the Department of Health and Human Services. ‘Caretaker’ also means any person who has the responsibility for the care of a juvenile in a child care facility as defined in Article 7 of Chapter 110 of the General Statutes and includes any person who has the approval of the care provider to assume responsibility for the juveniles under the care of the care provider. DSS has the authority to investigate reports of maltreatment committed by a parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker. If the alleged perpetrator does not meet the statutory definition of a caretaker,

DSS still has authority to take the report. When a report is not accepted for investigation by Child Protective Services because the alleged perpetrator is a non-caretaker, DSS is legally required to complete the following steps if it appears that a child may have been harmed in violation of any criminal statute by a non-caretaker:

- (a) give immediate verbal notifications to the District Attorney or his designee
- (b) send subsequent written notification to the District Attorney within 48 hours
- (c) give immediate verbal notification to the appropriate local law enforcement agency
- (d) send subsequent written notification to the appropriate local law enforcement agency within 48 hours

It is important to note that even though DSS may not have authority to investigate maltreatment by a non-caretaker, DSS is obligated to contact law enforcement and thus the reporter is not required to contact the police.

After child protective authorities have been contacted, continue with follow-up, investigation, documentation within the church.

Addendum to Child Protection Policy of Black Mountain Presbyterian Church June 17, 2020

At all times the staff and approved adults of Black Mountain Presbyterian Church will observe best practices in internet security for any online application for individual and group conversations and programs.

Online and Social Networking Procedures and Guidelines with Youth and Children

Each person who uses the Internet and social media/networking/Zoom to interact with **youth** shall comply with the following procedures and guidelines:

1. **Approved Adult** leaders, both staff and volunteers, should not establish direct social media contact with youth or children. Likewise, they should not privately message with youth or children. Adult leaders and volunteers may interact with children and youth in group communications and meetings using Zoom and other programs designed for group communications. Adult leaders, staff, and volunteers can communicate via email and text message with the parents of children and youth.
2. As with all communications, comments that are or could be construed to be harsh, threatening, intimidating, derogatory or demeaning should never be communicated electronically in any form to or about an adult leader, staff, volunteer, parent, youth or child. Any person who is aware that such a communication has been sent or received should report this information to either: an adult leader or a staff member. If the communications involved were initiated by a child or youth, the staff person who is designated as supervising that children or youth ministry will initiate a follow up conversations with the child/youth and their parent/guardian in order to address the inappropriate nature of the communication. If the communications involved were initiated by an adult leader, volunteer or staff person, the adult host will immediately notify the Head of Staff regarding the incident so that the matter can be directed to the supervising staff member or committee in order to address the inappropriate nature of the communication.
3. All sexually oriented electronic communications, in whatever form, are prohibited. Any person who is aware or becomes aware that sexually oriented material has been posted should immediately notify an adult leader or staff person. The adult leader or staff person should immediately notify the person supervising that children or youth ministry of the incident in order to initiate a follow up conversation with the child/youth and their parent/guardian in order to address the inappropriate nature or content of the posting.

If the posting of sexually oriented material is done by an adult leader or staff person, the incident should be immediately reported to the Head of Staff so that the matter can be addressed in a manner consistent with BMPC's Child Protection Policy which may include reporting of the incident to the appropriate authorities.

4. Adult leaders, staff, and volunteers are prohibited from posting inappropriate pictures, videos, and other media of any kind. Material that is inappropriate to be posted in a video chat or zoom is to be determined by the adult host of the chat and should consider: the age and maturity levels of the participants, the purpose or substantive content of the video chat or zoom, the generally accepted conduct and behavior at BMPC functions, and any guidelines or guidance provided by the Session or staff.
5. When zoom or other electronic online application as a sponsored church program, two or more approved adults with at least one staff member from the church must be present on the zoom. It is expected that the host of a zoom would be an approved adult.
6. Backgrounds and behaviors are expected to be appropriate for online church viewing.
7. One of the approved adults or staff will host the meeting allowing entrance from the waiting room.
8. Depending on the group or the host, screen sharing may not be allowed or will be limited by the host.
9. When someone chooses to share a screen with inappropriate materials the adult host will disable that person's presence on the video or zoom chat. If the inappropriate materials are shared by a child or youth, the adult host will communicate with the staff person designated as supervising the children or youth ministry for a follow up conversation with the child or youth and their parent or guardian in order to address why the inappropriate material was posted. If the inappropriate materials are shared by an adult leader, volunteer, or staff person, the adult host will immediately notify the Head of Staff of the incident.
10. The host adult will disable the private chats among participants.
11. Any youth who has been asked to leave a group meeting must meet with a church staff member as well as parent or guardian to discuss ways they must agree to be invited again. Offenses may include but are not limited to sharing inappropriate screens, offensive language, trash talking a member of the group, or displaying bad behavior and background material on their site.

12. When **preschool and elementary children** are participating on a zoom or other electronic online application as a sponsored church program, the following procedures are expected:
- An adult or guardian must be present for preschoolers in the room during the zoom meeting. The adult or guardian will be nearby, but not necessarily in the same room, monitoring the elementary children.
 - Two approved adults, staff, and volunteers, from the church program must be present on the zoom meeting.
 - Parents or guardians are expected to monitor backgrounds and behaviors for appropriate online viewing.
 - The host of the zoom will determine if private chats are appropriate or if they should be turned off.
 - Any child who displays inappropriate behavior will have their screen turned off by the host and must meet with the church staff member and a parent in order to regain entrance to the group meetings.

