



Palms Presbyterian Church Children & Youth Safety Policy

Preface

Palms Presbyterian Church takes seriously our scriptural and historical mandates to welcome and educate God's children. We recall that Jesus proclaimed, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." (Matt 19:14) As well in the Second Helvetic Confession we are reminded, "The Lord enjoined His ancient people to exercise the greatest care that young people, even from infancy, be properly instructed." (BoC, 5.233) We thank all those members and teachers who wish to aid our church and serve God in this important mandate. A significant part of the educational process is providing a safe place. We work hard to provide an environment for spiritual growth in a context of healthy, positive relationships with adults. We take seriously our responsibility to shield our students from emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Equally we desire to protect our adult leaders from accusations of abuse and to limit the exposure of the church to legal risk and liability.

When working with children and youth we need to be clear in thought, word and deed. Thus creating a safe space for children and adults to gather for education and fellowship is about setting boundaries. Please do not regard these boundaries as restrictions. The boundaries are put in place to create freedom free from fear, and concern for our safety.

Palms Presbyterian Church recognizes and appreciates the importance of our volunteer workers and we welcome all such participation in the work and ministry here at Palms. In order to be good stewards however we must balance this desire with the need to ensure the safety of our children and youth both in the work of our volunteers and our staff.

The following document will explain the classifications of adult involvement with children and youth at Palms Presbyterian Church, and lay the ground rules for appropriate behavior and situations in our educational life*.

Part of building the Body of Christ and educating that body is about creating and maintaining a safe place to gather in Christ's name.

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* In keeping with the language of the Book of Order, and the practices of the church the following meanings are to be understood:

- 1) SHALL signifies a practice that is mandated,
- 2) SHOULD signifies a practice that is strongly recommended,
- 3) CHILDREN and CHILD signifies people 5th grade or younger,
- 4) YOUTH signifies people who have graduated from 5th grade but have not yet graduated from high school.

1.0 In order to work with children and youth at Palms Presbyterian Church you shall adhere to the following policies and procedures:

1.1 Paid Employees:

- A. Complete an application form for employment and a consent form for a background check. The background check is a national check based on the subject's social security number. The results of this background check shall be satisfactorily reviewed and accepted by the staff of Palms. The consent form is found in addendum A of this report.
- B. Shall review Palms Child and Youth Safety Policy and agree to abide by it. Shall sign and return the agreement form found in addendum A of this report.
- C. Teen nursery workers shall have appropriate training and supervision.

1.2 Volunteers:

- A. Shall be a current member of Palms Presbyterian Church and have been a member for at least six months.
- B. Shall review Palms Child and Youth Safety Policy and agree to abide by it. Shall sign and return the agreement form found in addendum A of this report.
- C. Shall sign a consent form for a background check. The background check is a national check based on the subject's social security number. The results of this background check shall be satisfactorily reviewed and accepted by the staff of Palms. This form is found in addendum A of this report.
- D. Youth volunteers shall complete a covenant of conduct as found in addendum A of this report.

1.3 Parents and guardians of children and youth (inclusive of non-members) are always welcome to attend and/or participate in children and youth functions with their child to supplement a trained volunteer or paid employee, provided there is one trained volunteer or paid employee at the activity.

- 2.0 Rules for conducting safe activity for children and youth during onsite activities.**
- 2.1 Children's and youth activities and classes shall take place in rooms that have windows in the doors. In the event that a room does not have a window in the door, the door shall be left open. All new children and youth spaces shall have windows in the doors.
- 2.2 No classroom doors shall be locked while the room is occupied.
- 2.3 Children's and youth ministries should have at least two adults per group or classroom. In the event that there is only one adult, the door shall remain open. A youth helper or non-member volunteer shall never be alone in the classroom with children.
- 2.4 Staff and volunteers shall not intentionally spend time one-on-one with children or youth in a private setting including transportation. In the unintentional event that a child/youth is left with one adult, then child/youth and adult shall move to a public place until others arrive or until child/youth is picked up. By public place this policy means an area both visibly and audibly open to the public.
- 2.5 Adults supervising children needing to use the restrooms shall use the following procedures:
- A. Send pairs of children of the same gender to use the restroom in the case of children in grades 2 through 5.
 - B. In the case where that is not possible or with younger children only female adults shall assist a child in the restroom and the door shall be left open.
 - C. Diapers shall always be changed in full view of the room by a paid female nursery worker.
- 2.6 Nursery workers shall receive CPR and First Aid training. All volunteers and staff should receive this training.
- 2.7 Volunteers and Staff shall wear name tags while leading children's and youth activities.

3.0 Rules for conducting safe activity for children and youth during offsite activities.

3.1 In the case of Palms children and youth participating in an activity organized by an outside church or group approved by the session, and/or appropriate program staff, we shall abide by the safety policy of the organizing group in place of this policy so long as it is consistent with the guiding principles of this policy.

3.2 Palms children and youth shall seek always to abide by the entirety of this policy. In the case of a circumstance where the lodging and/or activity supervision of our children and youth cannot abide by all of the policies the following steps shall be taken to ensure the safety of Palms children and youth.

- A. The appropriate ministry team shall approve of lodging and supervision that will occur during the activity.
- B. Program staff shall inform and obtain approval from the parents of all children and youth participants affected by circumstances that do not allow for full compliance with this policy.

3.3 Palms children and youth activities should have an adult for every five children or youth. Palms children and youth activities shall have no less than one adult for every ten children or youth.

4.0 Rules for Parents and Guardians to aid in conducting safe activity for children and youth.

4.1 Parents and guardians of children attending the nursery shall fill out a registration form on their first visit and sign their child in and out each time the child is left in the nursery. The registration form is found in addendum A of this report.

4.2 Parents and guardians of children attending Sunday School ages three - fifth grade shall complete and sign a Church School Information form on their first date of attendance each new school year. This form informs the parents/guardians of dismissal procedures relative to the age of their child. This form is found in addendum A of this report.

4.3 A child or youth participating in a program outside of Sunday mornings shall fill out and have signed by a parent or guardian a church liability waiver, and a medical history form. These forms are found in addendum A of this report.

4.4 Youth participating in a program outside of Sunday morning shall also fill out and abide by the covenant of conduct. This is found in addendum A of this report.

5.0 Transportation of children and youth for off-site church activities.

5.1 In keeping with Palms policy any vehicle traveling with children or youth during church activities shall have two adults.

5.2 Use of vehicles owned by staff, parents, guardians, or volunteers, or vehicles rented for the purpose of transporting children and youth during church activities shall abide by the following.

A. The driver of the vehicle shall be in compliance with 1.1 and 1.2 as is fitting with status as either staff or volunteer.

B. The driver shall have a minimum of five years driving experience.

C. The driver and the passengers shall have completed a church liability waiver and transportation safety procedures form as found in addendum A of this policy.

5.3 Use of any passenger vehicle with legal occupancy in excess of 10 persons shall abide by the policy found in 5.2, as well as these additional qualifications.

A. The driver shall have successfully completed the training video and test offered by GuideOne Insurance.

B. The driver shall have been added to the insurance policy of the church.

6.0 Risk management and reporting of accidents and injuries resulting from accidents.

6.1 While this policy exists to create a safe environment for children and youth, the staff of Palms Presbyterian Church recognizes that accidents do occur. An accident is any unintended injury caused to a child and youth. In the event of such an accident the following policies and procedures shall be followed:

- A. A written accident report shall be completed within 24 hours of an accident if a child is injured while participating in a church ministry activity. The report form is found in addendum A of this report.
- C. That accident report shall be given to the staff person in charge of that ministry who shall then report it to the Church Business Administrator and to the Senior Pastor.
- D. In consultation together these three shall review and decide the appropriate response to the accident, including the notification of the church's insurance carrier.
- E. A copy of the accident report shall be kept by the Church Business Administrator.

7.0 Risk management and reporting of incidents.

- 7.1 If anyone has reason to suspect a child has been or is being physically, sexually, or emotionally abused, the following policies and procedures shall be followed:
 - A. An incident report shall be written up. The incident report is found in addendum A of this report.
 - B. The person suspecting abuse shall give that written report to the staff person in charge of that ministry and that staff person shall call the Department of Child and Family Services.
 - D. The staff person in charge of that ministry shall report it to the Church Business Administrator and to the Senior Pastor.
 - E. If the person suspecting abuse cannot reach the staff person in charge of that ministry, then they shall report the suspected abuse directly to the Church Business Administrator or the Senior Pastor.
- 7.2 All of the paperwork associated with the drafting of accident and incident reports, as well as the results of applications and background checks, shall be held in a safe and locked cabinet in the office of the Business Administrator. The only people with access to the applications, background checks and incident reports shall be the Business Administrator, the Pastoral Staff, and the Directors of the Youth and Children's programs.

- 7.3 Palms Presbyterian Church shall fully cooperate with the investigation by the Department of Child and Family Services and shall rely on the Department's expertise to handle these matters.
- 7.4 Palms Presbyterian Church, in order to balance the rights of the victim and the accused, shall determine in consultation with the Business Administrator, the Senior Pastor, the Chair of the Personnel Ministry Team and one other pastor whether it is necessary to suspend the accused pending the resolution of the investigation.
- 7.5 To further the end of creating a safe place for children and youth the Discipleship Ministry staff shall receive training on how to recognize the signs of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. All volunteers should receive such training.

8.0 Amending this document.

- 8.1 The Discipleship Ministry should re-evaluate this policy and safety implementation process annually to ensure that this policy contains all that is necessary to make Palms Presbyterian Church a safe place to gather for the education and fellowship of our children and youth. At that time they shall make any necessary recommendations to Session regarding changes to the policy.

Addendum A:

Forms to be used in compliance with the Children and Youth Safety Policy:

- A1: Background Check Authorization
- A2: Child and Youth Protection Policy Agreement
- A3: Youth Covenant of Conduct
- A4: Nursery Information Form
- A5a: Church School Information Form (Pre – K)
- A5b: Church School Information Form (grade 1)
- A5c: Church School Information Form (grades 2-5)
- A6: Church Liability Release
- A7: Medical History Form
- A8: Church Liability Waiver for Drivers and Passengers
- A9: Transportation Safety Procedures Form
- A10: Accident/Incident Report Form