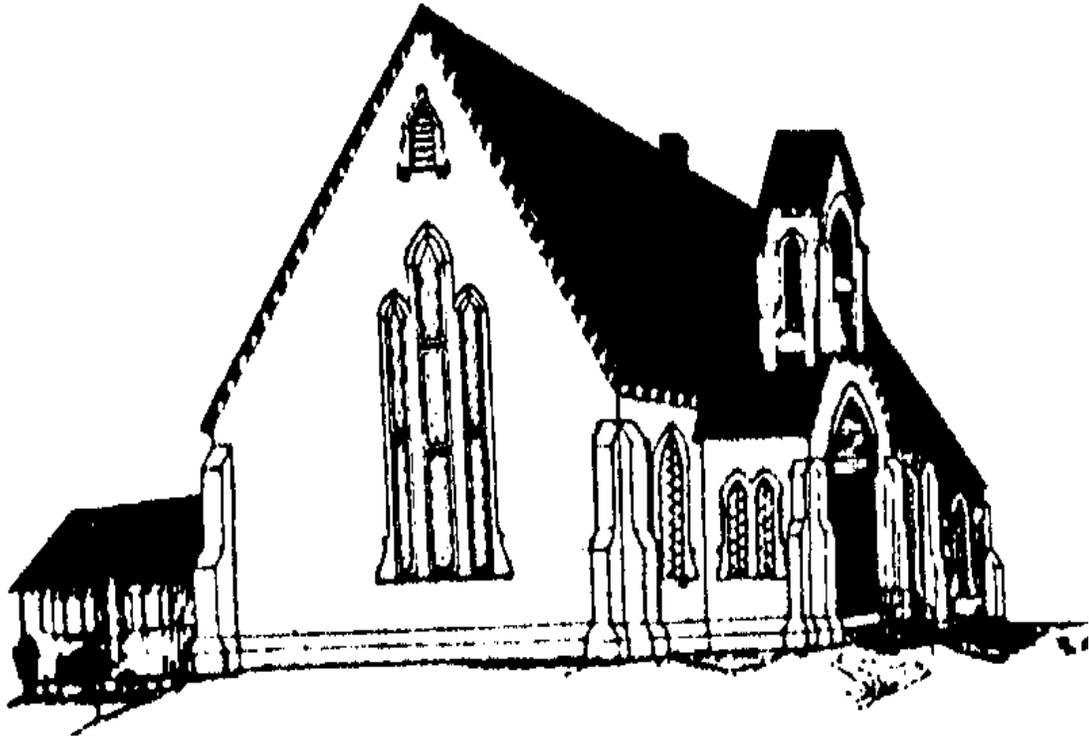


Safe and Nurturing Church Environment Policy



**The First Baptist Church
of Mansfield**

Table of Contents

Safe and Nurturing Church Environment Policy	3I.	General Background:	3II.		
Definitions and Safety Guidelines:	3A.	Definitions:	3B.	Safe and Nurturing	
4III.	Safety Policies	6A.	Recruiting Church Workers:	6B.	Reporting of Incidents:
6C.	Response to Reported Incidents:	6D.	Policy Monitoring	7IV.	Digital
Communications at FBCM	8A.	General Expectations About Digital Communications	8B.		
Violence and Weapons	8V.	Overview / Do's and Don'ts	8VI.	Forms and	
Documents	10A.	Criminal Records Check Form	10B.	Report of Suspected Misconduct Form	
11C.	Event / Transportation Permission Form	13			

Last Update: November 22, 2019

First Baptist Church of Mansfield

Safe and Nurturing Church Environment Policy

I. General Background:

Our Mission statement: The congregation of First Baptist Church of Mansfield aspires to be a Christ centered fellowship where all can seek a closer relationship with God. We recognize that all persons are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26). Both the Old and New Testaments instruct the faithful to do justice and to care for all persons. To that end, First Baptist Church of Mansfield is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for those in our congregation, especially the children and youth who are entrusted into this church's care in order to foster a positive Christian learning and worship experience.

II. Definitions and Safety Guidelines:

A. *Definitions:*

For the purpose of this document we are using the following definitions:

- 1) People and groups (Hereinafter referred to as Individual)
 - a) **Child:** Any minor.
 - b) **Minor:** Any individual under the age of eighteen.
 - c) **Youth:** Any minor who is in sixth grade or higher.
 - d) **Sunday School Teacher:** Anyone who has responsibility for a church school classroom.
 - e) **Response Team:** Two or more members of the Safety Committee, and those they deem beneficial who will objectively investigate an allegation of misconduct. The pastor may be invited to serve on a Response Team. Whenever there is an active "Report of Suspected Misconduct", this team will designate one person to be the spokesperson to the media relative to this incident. All other people should refer any inquires about the incident to the designated spokesperson, providing only the name and contact information of the spokesperson. The team will provide the Pastor, Moderator, Secretary and any others likely to be contacted by the media, with the name and contact information of the spokesperson.
 - f) **Staff:** Any individual who is involved with the conducting of church programs or events, whether paid or volunteer.
 - g) **Youth Resource Adults:** This term will be used throughout this document to refer to any adult who has a leadership or assisting role and directly interacts with minors as a function of church programs such as, but not limited to, Sunday School Teachers, Youth Group Advisors, Youth Choir Directors, and adults assisting the preceding.

- 2) Actions and behaviors:
- a) **Consent:** Child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct, as understood in this document, always involves a relationship in which both parties do not have equal power. Mutual consent is not possible where there is an imbalance of power, for example, between Sunday School teacher and student, youth group advisor and a youth, or youth choir director and choir member.
 - b) **Child Sexual Abuse:** Any activity in which a minor is used for the sexual gratification of another individual to include, but not be limited to: fondling, penetration, inappropriate touching, verbal comments, pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, any type of electronic messages (including text messages or social media) with sexual implications, and exhibitionism.
 - c) **Misconduct:**
 - (1) Neglect is the failure to provide reasonable supervision and care such that the child has been or could potentially be exposed to danger or harm.
 - (2) Verbal Abuse is when language directed at an individual demeans or belittles the individual either through tone of voice or word choice.
 - (3) Physical Abuse is considered to be use of physical force such as, but not limited to spanking, hitting, punching, and restraining, unless in case of clear and present danger to the individual or another individual.
 - (4) Sexual Misconduct:
 - (a) Sexual misconduct occurs when an individual engages in sexual behaviors involving a non-consenting person {see this section item 2 a) Consent: above}.
 - (b) Sexual behaviors include but are not limited to:
 - (i) sexual harassment (verbal and/or physical,)
 - (ii) sexual advances
 - (iii) sexual contact
 - (iv) fondling
 - (v) penetration
 - (vi) inappropriate touching
 - (vii) inappropriate verbal comments
 - (viii) pornographic materials
 - (ix) obscene phone calls
 - (x) exhibitionism
 - (xi) inappropriate contacts or comments via social media

B. Safe and Nurturing

Church Guidelines: Because we desire to be faithful in responding to the Biblical mandate to "let the children come unto me," and because we want to provide the safest possible program for our children, youth, and all individuals; and because we want to protect our staff, we will follow the guidelines below:

- 1) Respect:
 - (a) We will respect all individuals with both our actions and words.
 - (b) We will not use abusive, derogatory or racist language or actions.
- 2) Physical Contact:
 - (a) We will physically touch individuals only in appropriate ways and places:
 - (i) On the hand, shoulder or upper back
 - (ii) Never against an individual's wishes (unless in the case of clear and present danger of the individual or another individual)
 - (iii) Never causing the individual's discomfort
 - (iv) Never when it would have the effect of over-stimulating an individual
 - (v) Never in a place on an individual's body that would normally be covered by a bathing suit, unless for clear medical necessity, or when changing an infant's diaper or helping a young child or other individual use the toilet.
 - (b) Toileting Young Children
 - (i) Whenever possible parents should oversee the toileting needs of their children. If that is not possible, the bathroom door should be left open
 - (ii) When able, a child should take care of his/her own clothes after toileting.
- 3) Discipline:
 - (a) The purpose of discipline with minors is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of Christian responsibility, respect and cooperation.
 - (b) No individual shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping or any other form of physical punishment.
 - (c) Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insults, racial slurs or shouting.
 - (d) When we encounter a particularly difficult individual or situation, we will seek assistance from another responsible person and whenever possible we will seek the help and instruction of the caregiver.
- 4) Supervision
 - (a) Allowing minors to roam the church building or grounds unsupervised shall be discouraged.
- 5) Avoiding Problematic Situations
 - (a) All staff shall strive to give no appearance of evil and whenever possible leave doors open.
 - (b) When staff are providing transportation to/from a church sponsored event, each child must have permission form signed. The form will be carried in the vehicle transporting the child.

III. Safety Policies

A. *Recruiting Church Workers:*

- 1) In order to ensure safety for all persons involved, the following guidelines will be followed when inviting individuals to serve in ministries with minors:
 - a. An individual who does not declare their criminal history shall not be considered.
 - b. An individual with a felony conviction involving child abuse shall not be considered.
 - c. An individual who has any criminal history that includes neglect of a minor shall not be considered.
 - d. An individual who has any criminal history that may impair or disable their ability to effectively perform the functions of the ministry position shall not be considered.
 - e. An individual with any criminal conviction for a crime of violence shall be considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - f. Whenever possible, there should be 2 (or more) unrelated adults working with children or youth. If this is not possible, staff/volunteers will be aware of the need for giving “no opportunity for misunderstanding” and will strive for high standards of ethics in all areas of programming and care.
- 2) Supervision: The Board of Christian Education is responsible for oversight of Sunday School and Youth programs.

B. *Reporting of Incidents:*

Reporting of incidents includes abuse and neglect of any individual. All Youth Resource Adults of the FBCM shall follow the following reporting procedures in order to promote accountability among all members of the church:

- 1) Any and all incidents involving questionable or inappropriate behavior related to possible misconduct, sexual abuse, or neglect shall be immediately (within 24 hours) reported to a member of the Safety Committee and/or the Pastor.
- 2) The incident shall be documented in writing using the “Report of Suspected Misconduct Form (see Section IV. Forms and Documents: G. Report of Suspected Misconduct Form – page 10) by the person who receives the report. The report shall contain the date, time, individuals involved, and a full explanation of the incident.
- 3) A Response Team shall meet within 72 hours to discuss and implement an appropriate response. The Board of Christian Education will annually inform all staff/volunteers of their responsibility to report all incidents of possible misconduct

C. *Response to Reported Incidents:*

- 1) The Response Team of the FBCM shall treat every allegation of sexual abuse, misconduct, inappropriate behavior and neglect very seriously and shall

thoroughly investigate every allegation in a prompt, professional and confidential manner.

- 2) When questionable or inappropriate behavior related to possible sexual abuse or other inappropriate behavior is observed and reported, responses may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Implementation of any actions necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the individual
 - b. Closely monitor the accused and document observations.
 - c. Discussion with the accused to ensure he/she understands and respects the church guidelines and appropriate limits of behavior.
 - d. Immediate removal from the position and place him or her on leave pending completion of the investigation.
- 3) Overall evaluation of the incident should include interviews with any of the following: the alleged victim, victim's parents or guardian, the accused and any witnesses. Counseling referrals should be made if necessary.
- 4) Every effort shall be made to comfort and protect the victim of the alleged abuse to ensure that the victim's needs are being met.
- 5) If an alleged incident involves a minor, the parent or legal guardian shall be notified immediately.
- 6) The accused shall be treated with respect and dignity during the investigation process.
- 7) The Pastor of the church may need to be free to provide pastoral care to all parties involved, therefore, may excuse her/himself from the Response Team, if necessary.
- 8) A single spokesperson shall be designated by the response team to speak to the media on behalf of the church.
- 9) For any serious allegation that is found to have merit:
 - a. The Response Team shall report the incident to relevant law enforcement agencies including the Department of Children and Families.
 - b. The Response Team shall notify and discuss all substantiated allegations with counsel to the church to ensure that all legal requirements are met in the response process.
 - c. The Response Team shall notify the FBCM insurance broker of the allegation or incident.
 - d. The accused shall be removed from his/her position pending the completion of an investigation and the pastor and Executive Board notified.

D. Policy Monitoring

- 1) All staff/volunteers of the FBCM shall be given a copy of this policy in order to provide instruction of his/her responsibility in preventing and reporting possible misconduct.

IV. Digital Communications at FBCM

A. *General Expectations About Digital Communications*

- 1) All communications sent digitally (email, social networking sites or platforms, notes, texts, or posts, etc.) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL and can be shared or reposted to others.
- 2) There must be transparency regarding FBCM social media accounts, which means only the social media accounts representing FBCM are authorized for church use in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed. These accounts have multiple administrators including Communications Committee members and the pastor. FBCM does not have a responsibility to review or monitor the personal pages or groups that are not sponsored by FBCM.
- 3) In the virtual world, healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- 4) In the virtual world, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality, and expectations for relationship.
- 5) Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.
- 6) Church members at large are expected to be sensitive to the vulnerability of FBCM children and youth and not post pictures or names without specific permission from parents.

B. *Violence and Weapons*

- 1) No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
- 2) Bullying (unacceptable mean/threatening behavior) of any kind by anyone is not acceptable.
- 3) Children and youth shall not have weapons of any kind at any event or program for children or youth. Exceptions to this restriction may be made for camp programs or other specific programs with prior approval.
- 4) Suspected violations must be reported immediately.

V. Overview / Do's and Don'ts

DOs : Adults are encouraged to:

- Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include: daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;
- Spend time with and listen to children and youth, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;
- Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include the following as long as they are welcomed by the recipient:
 - high fives and fist bumps;
 - hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer;
 - brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms;

- brief hugs and arms around shoulders.
- Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior.
- When possible, send communication (1) to entire groups, (2) on an individual's "wall," or (3) in public areas, rather than in private messages. This includes photos, images and videos. Verbal communication and face-to-face meetings are preferred when responding to emotionally driven communications.

DON'Ts: Adults shall not under any circumstances:

- Provide children or youth with alcohol, cannabis, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
- Arrive at a FBCM connected event under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs at any children's or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event. Adults should be aware that even when they do not believe they are "under the influence", they may still carry an odor of marijuana, alcohol or other substance, and this is not acceptable.
- Consume alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children's or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- When sending emails to a child or youth that contain personal or private information regarding that child or youth, a copy should be sent to the parents or guardians as well.
- Apply privacy settings that are consistent with all children and youth, across all social networking sites and platforms. Avoid playing favorites or the appearance of playing favorites.

Submit connection requests (such as friend requests on Facebook or "Add Me" on Snapchat) to children or youth for personal interactions. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the imbalance of power between youth and adults. Youth may ask to be "friends," and adults should discern the nature of contact appropriate for healthy ministry

"Tagging" children in digital media is prohibited. When written permission is provided by a parent/guardian, the captioning of photos or videos of minors may be permitted. The caption should not include the minor's full name, nor should it create a clickable link to someone's personal profile. Children are prohibited from self-tagging.

VI. Forms and Documents

A. *Criminal Records Check Form*

First Baptist Church of Mansfield

I hereby authorize the First Baptist Church of Mansfield to conduct a Criminal Background check on me. I hereby authorize the release of any information by organizations or entities having relevant information on me. I hereby release any organization from any and all liability and responsibility arising from their responses, comments and statements made in good faith and without gross negligence or malice.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____

Maiden name if applicable: _____

All aliases or previously used names: _____

Date of birth: _____ Place of birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Today's date: _____

Record Sent to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

B. *Report of Suspected Misconduct Form*

First Baptist Church of Mansfield

Reported by: _____
Name and Title

Address _____

City, State and Zip Code: _____

Telephone number (including area code): _____

Date of Report: _____

Person suspected of misconduct: _____

Name and Title: _____

Address: _____

City, State and Zip Code: _____

Telephone number (include area code): _____

Other person(s) involved (victim): _____
Name(s)

Age and sex: _____

Address: _____

City, State, and Zip Code: _____

Telephone Number (including area code): _____

Report of Suspected Misconduct (continued)

Describe incident(s) of suspected misconduct, including date(s), time(s), and location(s):

Identify any potential witnesses to the incident or those who would have relevant information regarding the incident, including names, addresses, and telephone numbers where available:

Other information that may be helpful to the investigation:

C. *Event / Transportation Permission Form*

First Baptist Church of Mansfield

I give my permission for _____ to attend the
Child/Children's Name(s)

_____ on _____ at _____ .
Name of Event Date Location

I also give permission for him/her to receive medical treatment, if necessary, and in the event I cannot be reached.

Parent or Guardian Signature Date

I give my permission for _____ to be transported by
_____ to / from (circle one or both) the above named event.
Name of Driver

Parent/ Guardian signature Date

I do hereby release the First Baptist Church of Mansfield and all of its affiliated organizations, as well as their officers, agents, employees, and volunteers, from any and all claims, demands, actions, or causes of action due to death, injury, or illness, in any way arising from church activities, including but not limited to transportation to and from the event. I further agree that the financial responsibility for securing care, in the case of injury resulting from participation in church programs is a matter between the participant and his/her health care provider, and that the First Baptist Church of Mansfield cannot pay health care providers for treatment of any injuries. It is further agreed that the participant will assume all legal responsibility for their personal safety and actions while participating in the program and while traveling to and from the program activities.

Parent / Guardian signature Date