

**Sexual Abuse, Sexual Harassment and  
Molestation Prevention Policy**

**First Presbyterian Church – Cookeville, TN**

First Presbyterian Church does not permit or allow sexual abuse or molestation to occur in the workplace or at any activity sponsored by or related to it. In order to make this ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY clear to all employees (volunteer and staff), we have adopted mandatory procedures that all employees, volunteers, family members, and victims must follow when they learn of, witness, or suspect sexual abuse or molestation.

**Definition**

Sexual abuse takes the form of inappropriate sexual contact or interaction for the gratification of the actor who is functioning as a caregiver and is responsible for the child's care. Sexual abuse of adults includes abuse of a woman or man by a man or woman. Sexual abuse is an act of violence, which the attacker uses against someone they perceive as weaker than they are. This includes sexual assault, exploitation, injury, or molestation. Sexual harassment, another form of inappropriate behavior, is also prohibited by First Presbyterian Church. Sexual harassment includes verbal or written messages of a suggestive nature occurring in person or via mail/e-mail/social media/telephone/text message.

FPC has adopted a child and youth protection policy, which is adopted and referred to for more specific policies as it relates to children.

**Training**

Employees (staff and volunteers) will receive annual training regarding the sexual abuse and molestation prevention policy. This training will be offered at First Presbyterian Church at no charge to participants. Implementing this training will be the members of Christian Education.

**Reporting Procedure**

All staff and volunteers who learn of child sexual abuse being committed must immediately report it to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS). If it is an emergency situation, call 911 or the child abuse hotline (1-877- 237-0004). In non-emergency situations, the report can be made with an online form found at <https://apps.tn.gov/carat/>. Employees who work with children are provided with DCS posters displaying the abuse hotline in all classrooms at First Presbyterian Church.

If the victim is an adult, contact the Adult Protective Services intake hotline at 1-888-277-8366.

A REPORT FORM CAN ALSO BE FOUND IN THE CHURCH OFFICE OR ON THE FPC WEBSITE.

The allegation shall also be reported to the clerk of session of First Presbyterian Church. The clerk will inform the chair of the personnel committee, who will appoint a committee of three to perform an independent investigation of the allegation. If the committee determines it is necessary to retain further assistance in the investigation, the committee will request approval from the chair of personnel to authorize retention of an investigator from Praesidium for assistance.

**Investigations**

We take allegations of sexual abuse very seriously. The staff and session of First Presbyterian Church will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or regulatory agencies.

If the allegation is against an employee of the church, the clerk of session of First Presbyterian Church must also be immediately informed. The clerk will inform the chair of the personnel committee. We reserve the right to place the subject of investigation on involuntary leave or to reassign that person to responsibilities that do not involve personal contact with individuals or children. To the fullest extent possible, but consistent with our legal obligation to report suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, we will endeavor to keep the identities of the alleged victims and investigation subject confidential.

If the investigation substantiates the allegation, our policy provides for disciplinary penalties, including but not limited to termination of the actor's relationship with our organization.

If the complaint is against the pastor of the church, the report shall also be filed with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee at 615-332-3330.

### **Signs of Abuse**

There are a number of "red flags" that suggest someone is being sexually abused. They take the form of physical or behavioral evidence.

Physical evidence may include but is not limited to:

Sexually transmitted diseases; difficulty walking normally; stained, bloody, or torn undergarments; genital pain or itching; and physical injuries involving the external genitalia.

Behavioral signs may include but are not limited to:

Fear or reluctance about being left in the care of a particular person; recoiling from touch; bundling oneself in excessive clothing, especially at night; discomfort or apprehension when sex is discussed; and nightmares or fear of night/darkness.

### **Retaliation Prohibited**

We prohibit any retaliation against anyone, including an employee (volunteer or staff), student, member of the congregation, family member, or other individual who in good faith reports sexual abuse, alleges that it is being committed, or participates in an investigation. Intentionally false or malicious accusations of sexual abuse are prohibited.

Anyone who improperly retaliates against someone who has made a good faith allegation or sexual abuse, or intentionally provides false information to that effect, will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.