

CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION COVENANT
DECEMBER 2012-Revised February 2018
NORTH DECATUR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we guide our lives individually and in community by the Great Commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important commandment. And a second is like it: Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39)

As members of North Decatur Presbyterian Church, we are called to be a loving and caring community to each other, to our visitors, and to those we serve. We take seriously our baptismal vows to share the good news of Jesus Christ and to nurture the faith of others.

We are committed to providing a safe and wholesome environment for everyone who participates in the programs of North Decatur Presbyterian Church. Abuse or harassment in any form, physical, mental, or sexual, will not be tolerated.

Because we recognize that our youngest members require heightened protection, this Covenant is designed to ensure the safety and well-being of our children and youth and to preserve the integrity of all persons who minister to our children and youth.

COVENANT

All employees, volunteers, and others who work with children and youth will comply with the “Requirements of Employees, Volunteers, and Others in Children and Youth Ministry,” “Child and Youth Protection Guidelines,” and “Reporting and Response Procedures” which are set forth below.

REVIEW

With oversight and input provided by the staff of NDPC and the Response Team (as defined below), the Children, Youth and Family Committee and Personnel Committee will jointly: 1) review this Child and Youth Protection Covenant on an annual basis to determine its effectiveness and make any necessary improvements, and 2) make an annual report to the Session on the status of this Covenant.

I. REQUIREMENTS OF EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS, AND OTHERS IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY

Paid Employees

- Applicants for employment will satisfy the following:
 - a. Complete “NDPC Employment Application Form” (see **Appendix A**)
 - b. Interview with Pastor* or appropriate staff and Personnel Committee
 - c. Pass drug screening test
 - d. Agree to a National Criminal Records Check, Georgia Criminal Background Check, and any other background checks deemed necessary by the church**
 - e. If driving or transporting children or youth off church property: Provide a copy of a valid Georgia driver’s license and agree to a check of a current Motor Vehicle Report
- Current employees (as of December 2012) will satisfy c), d), and e) above.
- All employees currently and in the future will satisfy the following:
 - a. Execute “Participation Covenant of all Persons working with Children and Youth” (see **Appendix B**)
 - b. Attend child protection training approved by the Children and Youth Education Committee (must be renewed every 3 years)
 - c. If driving or transporting children or youth off church property: attend defensive driving course for 12+ passenger vehicles (must be renewed every 3 years)

Volunteers and Independent Contractors (including Occasional Babysitters)

- All volunteers who work with children and youth (including, but not limited to, youth advisors, confirmation mentors, church school teachers and substitutes, shepherds, extended session volunteers, special event volunteers, and children’s choir volunteers) and independent contractors (including occasional babysitters) who work with children and youth will satisfy the following:
 - a. Complete “NDPC Volunteer Information Form” (see **Appendix C**)
 - b. Be a member or affiliate member of NDPC (or member of youth group) for at least 6 months unless otherwise approved by the Children, Youth and Family Committee
 - c. Interview with a program staff person or person designated by program staff person
 - d. Execute “Participation Covenant of all Persons Working with Children and Youth” (see **Appendix B**)
 - e. Attend child protection training approved by the Children, Youth and Family Committee (must be renewed every 3 years)
 - f. Agree to a National Criminal Records Check, Georgia Criminal Background Check, and any other background checks deemed necessary by the church**

- g. If driving or transporting children or youth off church property: Provide a copy of a valid Georgia driver's license and agree to a check of a current Motor Vehicle Report; receive training from church staff person who has attended defensive driving course

Ruling Elders will satisfy the following:

- a. Attend child protection training approved by the Children, Youth and Family Committee within three years of the expiration of their term as elder and maintain the training up to date so that the three-year requirement is met
- b. Execute "Participation Covenant of all Persons Working with Children and Youth" (see **Appendix B**)

Members of the Congregation will be invited and encouraged to attend child protection training approved by the Children, Youth and Family Committee.

* **"Pastor"** as used in this Covenant refers to either a Pastor or either or both Co-Pastors

****Results of Criminal Background Checks**

The Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries will receive the results of any criminal background check on applicants, employees, volunteers, or independent contractors other than the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries and the Pastor. The Pastor will receive and handle the results of any criminal background check on the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries. The Committee on Ministry for the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta will receive and handle the results of any criminal background check on the Pastor.

If an applicant for employment, current employee, volunteer, or independent contractor has a criminal conviction for domestic violence, assault or other violent crime, drugs or alcohol violations, or crimes against children, the applicant, employee, volunteer, or independent contractor will not be eligible to work with children and youth at NDPC, unless otherwise approved after careful consideration of extenuating circumstances by the Pastor, the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries, the Clerk of Session, the Chair of the Personnel Committee (in the case of applicants for employment and employees), and the Chair of the Children, Youth and Family Committee (in the case of volunteers and independent contractors). The results of any background criminal checks will be stored in a secure, locked file cabinet at the church.

II. TRAINING AND EDUCATION OBJECTIVES

The Children, Youth and Family Committee will make training available to employees, volunteers, and independent contractors as required by this Covenant with the following objectives:

1. To emphasize our collective responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing community for our children
2. To educate regarding normal child development (including sexual development)
3. To promote an environment of discussing sexuality in healthy, positive ways
4. To provide awareness of the problem of abuse (sexual, physical, and mental), neglect, and sexual exploitation of children
5. To help identify behavior which is typical of abused, neglected, and exploited children
6. To practice reflective listening skills
7. To ensure understanding of NDPC's Child and Youth Protection Covenant and orientation to the procedures.
8. To provide education of appropriate Internet and social media usage

III. CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION GUIDELINES

Employees, volunteers, and independent contractors who work with children and youth in connection with NDPC activities will comply with the following guidelines:

Two or More Adults

At least two (preferably unrelated) adults over the age of 18 will supervise all church sponsored programs and activities involving children and youth, whether on or off church property. Adults must remain in sight of one another at all times except in extenuating circumstances. Adults in leadership roles are expected to avoid situations where they are alone with children and youth. The presence of two or more adults prevents awkward circumstances where child abuse could occur or be alleged, allows shared leadership, and facilitates appropriate discipline. The Covenant also extends to all overnight events. Under no circumstances can one adult alone take or accompany children or youth on an overnight outing.

Adults are to avoid one-adult, one-child situations unless a parent has given prior written permission. If it is necessary for a child to be transported home after an event, an effort should be made to contact the family and inform them of the situation before transporting the child. If it is necessary for an adult to drive alone with a child, the adult should notify another adult before and after the period during which he/she is alone with the child. It is permissible for one adult driver to transport several children and youth in a single vehicle in a convoy of vehicles traveling to or from an event.

When one-on-one interactions between children and youth and employees, volunteers, or independent contractors are necessary (e.g., in emergency situations or occasions of pastoral care), care must be taken to conduct the meeting in an environment that provides visibility by other adults or in which other adults are in and out of an area where an employee or volunteer is working with a child or youth. Another adult must have knowledge of the whereabouts of the employee, volunteer, or independent contractor and with whom he or she is meeting.

Age Requirements

Adult leaders must be at least 18 years old and must be at least five years older than the young people with whom they are working. Volunteers under the age of 18 years old must be at least 14 years old, unless otherwise approved by the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries, and must be under the supervision of an adult. Children under 14 years old may accompany parents who serve as volunteers. While persons under the age of 18 years old provide excellent help, they cannot be expected to have developed the judgment and maturity required to be fully responsible for supervising younger children.

Open Door Policy

Doors to rooms in which children and youth are present are to remain open. If noise increases to a level that disturbs other classes, the door may be shut as long as there is a clear glass window in at least part of the door or a swinging half door. Vision through the glass must be unimpaired.

Restroom Supervision

The exact nature of restroom supervision will depend on the age of the children. General guidelines are as follows:

- Adult leaders will make sure suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities.
- Adult leaders will always use proper supervision when children are using public bathrooms to ensure their safety.
- Adult leaders may call on other leaders who may be “floating” from room to room to assist with restroom supervision in order to maintain the two-adult rule.
- If adult leaders are assisting younger children, doors without windows or swinging half doors to the restroom facility must remain open.
- Adult leaders will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom in visual sight of another adult. The Covenant allows protection and privacy for the children and protection for the adult leaders.

Guidelines for Healthy Discipline

The purpose of discipline is to teach the child appropriate behavior in a loving and nurturing way. It is important to work with each child to determine what he or she needs to fully participate but not to the detriment of other children in the group. Appropriate discipline will vary with the age of the child, but praise and other forms of positive reinforcement for good work/behavior are appropriate. Distracting the child from the objectionable behavior, separating the child from the group into a different part of the room, and having a choice of activities available are also appropriate. If objectionable behavior persists, parents and other childcare workers should be enlisted to help. Any physical punishment is unacceptable.

Social Media

Social media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to advance interactive communication—both public and private uses—and to include instant messaging, texting, emailing, and video chatting. Because social media is always evolving and changing, this living document will be revisited as necessary. The purpose of the following guidelines & practices are to encourage intentional and appropriate use of the various forms of social media.

All employees and members of NDPC are personally responsible for the content that they publish online. Be mindful that what you publish on a social media network, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Pinterest, may be viewed not only by the intended recipient but may be shared by that recipient or may be inadvertently viewed by others. Consider all content you post as if it were public. A good rule of thumb: If you do not want it posted on the church sign, website, or bulletin, do not text it or post it via social media.

- Photos of minors may only be published or posted after a photo release has been signed by their parent/guardian. Photos must not identify minors in photographs posted online or in print.
- Adults who have a Facebook or other social networking site page and who work with children and youth will not submit nor accept a “friend” connecting requests to children and youth. Any conversations with minors shall occur in open channels.
- Adults will not engage in video chats, on-line text chats, blogs, or video blogs with children or youth with whom the adult works at the church, except as part of official church activities. Even if using NDPC social networks, it is not appropriate to provide any personal counseling. If counseling is appropriate, follow the “two adults” and “open view” policies elsewhere in this document.
- Personal online postings will protect the privacy and identity of all children and youth. It is not appropriate to share someone else’s joys or concerns without their consent.
- When adults who work with children and youth need to contact minors related to church activities via email, they shall copy another adult (ideally a parent or guardian) on the message.
- If adults wish to “check in” at a location when supervising children or youth events, they may only “check in” themselves.
- If a social media account for children or youth activities is created for NDPC it will always include three administrators (one staff person, one committee chair and one other adult) with full administrative rights. The chairs of Children Youth and Family Committee and Communications must approve the creation of the account. These groups will be closed accounts requiring permission to access by one of the administrators.

- Cyber-bullying is not condoned. If a volunteer or employee suspects this is happening to a child or youth the reporting guidelines are the same as for other potential offenses in this policy.

Overnight Travel

Certain activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for youth and staff/volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, retreats, etc.). The following are recommended guidelines and practices:

Written permission from the Co-Pastor and Parents must be given if there are to be any exceptions to the following guidelines.

All youth who participate in an overnight or offsite program of North Decatur Presbyterian Church must have a permission form on file. These files shall be in the possession of the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries in the event of an emergency. Copies should be provided for adult volunteer leaders as well.

All adults who attend an overnight trip must be trained in the Child and Youth Protection Covenant. In addition, adult leaders must successfully complete and pass a criminal background check.

There should always be at least two unrelated adults present, preferably male and female adults where children or youth of both genders are present. The recommended adult to youth ratio should be at least 1:6.

Follow the “Rule of Three”. There should always be two adults with one minor. And if that is not possible, one adult can accompany two minors. If possible, the two adults in a “rule of three” situation should not be related.

Overnight programs will provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements. In most cases, this will mean gender-specific sleeping areas.

A single adult and a single youth will never sleep alone in the same space.

Separate bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned to use a single facility.) Adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than the youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided.

If private dressing rooms, bathrooms and adult supervision are provided, there may be situations in which it is best for male and female participants to sleep in the same open area.

Transgender and gender nonconforming students shall be given the opportunity to room with others according to their gender identity. Student comfort is paramount in the decisions around overnight trips.

- Make arrangements in consultation with the student. If the transgender student's parents or guardians are involved and supportive they may also be consulted.
- Be sensitive to the need to maintain the student's privacy and not disclose or require disclosure of the student's transgender status to the other students or their parents without the consent of the transgender student and/or the student's parent.
- Make efforts to accommodate any student who desires greater privacy; however, transgender or gender non-conforming students should not be isolated.

On overnight trips, each participant should have his or her own bed. In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff, volunteer, and youth will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a "one-person-to-one bag or blanket" rule will be observed.

All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors must be given to an adult leader unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and person in charge. Exceptions may include inhalers and epi-pens. Only the designated adult leader should administer medications.

Injuries to Children and Youth During Church Activities

For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises while a child is under the care of a volunteer, employee, or independent contractor during a church activity, the child will receive first aid (band-aids, etc.) as appropriate, and the volunteer or employee will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up.

For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned, in addition to the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

After medical attention has been provided to a child, a volunteer or employee will complete an Incident Report (see **Appendix D**) if, while in the care of the volunteer or employee during a church activity, a child or youth becomes ill or receives an injury that requires first aid or medical treatment; receives a bump or blow to the head or other visible injury regardless of treatment; is transported by ambulance from the church activity; or experiences any other unusual or unexpected incident that jeopardizes the safety of the child. The Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries will maintain the Incident Report in a secure, locked file cabinet.

Review of Sex Offender Registry

The Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries will be responsible for periodically checking official Sex Offender Registries to determine if any members or regular visitors are

listed on such Registries. If a member or regular visitor is a registered sex offender, members of the Response Team will review the matter and meet with the individual to: 1) let the individual know that NDPC is aware of his or her status on the Sex Offender Registry; 2) explain NDPC's Child and Youth Protection Covenant; 3) identify particular needs of the individual; 4) obtain authorization for a background check and release of probation/parole information; 5) discuss appropriate restrictions on the individual's participation in church activities; and 6) determine who needs to know information about the individual's situation.

Other Requirements

- Employees, volunteers, and independent contractors will respect the rights of children and youth not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable. To avoid uncomfortable situations, employees, volunteers, and independent contractors should ask the child or youth before hugging or otherwise touching. Adults will discourage children from touching others in an inappropriate manner.
- All volunteers and staff will wear proper identification tags while supervising activities for minors (e.g., proper identification tag may read: "Church School Teacher" and the person's name).
- Groups/classes will not change assigned classroom spaces without the approval of the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries.
- All nursery and preschool children will be signed in and out of the classroom by a parent/guardian or an adult designated in writing by a parent/guardian. All nursery and preschool classrooms will utilize nametags for younger children for easy identification.
- For each preschool or elementary child participating in church-sponsored activities, a parent/guardian must execute an "Information Sheet" on an annual basis (see **Appendix E**). Parents of middle school and high school youth will execute a "Youth Ministries Permission Form" (see **Appendix F**), which grants permission to participate in youth activities, authorizes emergency medical treatment, requests a photo release, and provides contact and medical information. The Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries will ensure that the Information Sheets and Youth Ministries Permission Forms are maintained in a secure, locked file cabinet.

Prohibited Conduct

Employees, volunteers, and independent contractors will not engage in the following activities:

- Verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse of children and youth
- Discipline of children or youth by use or threat of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care
- Use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or being impaired by legally prescribed drugs during church-sponsored programs
- Smoking or use of tobacco during church-sponsored programs

- Profanity, inappropriate language or jokes, or any kind of harassment in the presence of children or youth
- Possession of obscene or pornographic materials
- Carrying any type of weapon on church property
- Sharing inappropriate details of their personal lives or asking children or youth to share inappropriate details through any form of communication, written, verbal, or electronic
- Dating or having a romantic relationship with participants under 18 years old
- Giving gifts to individual children or youth without the knowledge and permission of parents/guardians and the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries

Non-Church Sponsored Groups

All outside groups who use NDPC facilities for programs and activities that involve children or youth will be provided a copy of the Child and Youth Protection Guidelines set forth in this Covenant and will be required to comply with the Child and Youth Protection Guidelines. In addition, outside groups will be required to conduct national and state criminal background checks on any persons affiliated with such groups who will work with children and youth. Outside groups will provide NDPC with prompt written notice of any claim of abuse that arises from activities on NDPC property and will comply with all applicable laws relating to such claim of abuse. Outside groups will sign a statement that they understand and will comply with these requirements.

IV. REPORTING AND RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS

Mandated Reporting

Under Georgia law, effective July 1, 2012 all clergy and all persons who work with children and youth, either as volunteers or employees, are mandated reporters of child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect. NDPC’s procedures for reporting and responding to reports of suspected abuse or neglect are set forth below and are designed to comply with Georgia law. All clergy and persons who work with children and youth at NDPC, either as volunteers, employees, or independent contractors, must comply with these procedures.

Definitions

In Georgia, a “**child**” is under 16 years old for purposes of laws on sexual abuse, and a “**child**” is under 18 years old for purposes of laws on sexual exploitation (child pornography), physical and mental abuse, and neglect.

“**Child molestation**” (**sexual abuse**) in Georgia occurs when a person commits “any immoral or indecent act” to, or in the presence of, or with any child under 16 years old with the intent to arouse the sexual desires of either the child or the person. Child molestation includes sending a sexually explicit photograph or video to a child under 16 years old. “Aggravated child

molestation” occurs when a person 1) physically injures a child while committing the act of child molestation, or 2) commits an act of sodomy (oral or anal sex) with a person under 16 years old.

“**Sexual exploitation**” (**child pornography**) occurs when photographs or videos are made, possessed, or distributed of a child under 18 years old exposing genitals or pubic area or simulating sexually explicit conduct.

“**Cruelty to children**” (**physical or mental abuse or neglect**) has different degrees of severity in Georgia and involves inflicting cruel or excessive physical or mental pain on a child under 18 years old or depriving a child under 18 years old of necessary sustenance to the extent that the child’s health or well-being is jeopardized.

“**Reasonable Cause**” to believe that a child is the victim of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect includes, but is not limited to, actual disclosure by a child that he or she is a victim of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect; actual disclosure by an adult that he or she has committed the offense of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect against a child; or the witnessing of such offenses or evidence of such offenses against a child.

Child Protection Response Team

On an annual basis, the Session will appoint a Child Protection Response Team (the “**Response Team**”), which will consist of the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries and at least 4 members of the church with experience or expertise in working with children and youth, in understanding developmentally appropriate behavior of children and youth, and/or in the proper handling of claims or suspicions of child abuse and neglect. The Response Team will have the responsibilities set forth below, will serve as a resource to the Session on policy and procedural matters relating to this Covenant, and will assist the Children, Youth and Family Committee and Personnel Committee in preparing an annual report to the Session on the status of this Covenant.

Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect

All matters of reporting and responding to reports of sexual abuse or exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect will be handled with respect and confidentiality in accordance with the procedures set forth below and applicable law.

1. Pastor Has Reasonable Cause of Abuse or Neglect

If the Pastor has Reasonable Cause to believe that a child is the victim of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect, regardless of the source of the information, the confidential nature of the information, or any clergy-parishioner privilege that may otherwise exist, the Pastor must, within 24 hours of receipt of such report, call 855-GACHILD or the appropriate police authority or district attorney.

2. Employee, Volunteer, or Independent Contractor Has Reasonable Cause of Abuse or Neglect

If an employee, volunteer, or independent contractor, in the course of attending to children at NDPC, has Reasonable Cause to believe that a child is the victim of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect, such employee, volunteer, or independent contractor must, within 24 hours of such belief, contact the Pastor or the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries or if they are unavailable call 855-GACHILD. The Pastor or the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries to whom such report is made must, within 24 hours of receipt of such report, notify Department of Family and Children Services or the appropriate police authority or district attorney.

3. Employee, Volunteer, or Independent Contractor Has Suspicion (but not Reasonable Cause) of Abuse or Neglect

If an employee, volunteer, or independent contractor, in the course of attending to children at NDPC, suspects (but does not have Reasonable Cause) that a child is the victim of, or at risk of being a victim of, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect, then the employee or volunteer will, within 24 hours of such suspicion, notify the Pastor or the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries. If they are unavailable a member of the response team is to be notified. In response to such notice, one of the following actions will occur:

(a) Evidence of Reasonable Cause. If the Pastor or the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries to whom such report is made concludes that there is Reasonable Cause to believe that a child is the victim of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect, he or she will, within 24 hours following receipt of such report, notify Department of Family and Children Services or the appropriate police authority or district attorney.

(b) Referral to Response Team if Reasonable Cause Uncertain. If the Pastor or the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries to whom such report is made is not able to conclude that there is Reasonable Cause to believe that a child is the victim of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect, he or she will immediately notify a member of the Response Team. The Response Team will immediately determine and implement the appropriate response to the report, including conducting an internal investigation if necessary. The Response Team will keep the Pastor fully informed of its actions. The Response Team will make one of the following determinations and will prepare a written report (hard copy only) of its investigation, findings, and/or determination, which NDPC will maintain in a secure, locked file cabinet.

(i) Determination by Response Team of Reasonable Cause. If the Response Team determines that there is Reasonable Cause to believe that a child is the victim of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect, then the Response Team will, within 24 hours of such determination, notify the Pastor or the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries who will, within 24 hours following receipt of such report, notify Department of Family and Children Services or the appropriate police authority or district attorney.

(ii) Determination by Response Team of Potential Risk but No Reasonable Cause. If the Response Team determines that there is no Reasonable Cause to believe that a child is the victim of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect, but determines that a child may be at risk of such harm, then the Response Team will immediately notify the Pastor or the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries of this determination and recommend appropriate action in an effort to protect the safety of the child.

(iii) Determination by Response Team of No Potential Risk and No Reasonable Cause. If the Response Team determines that there is no Reasonable Cause to believe that a child is the victim of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect, or at risk of being a victim, the Response Team will notify the Pastor or the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries of this determination and may recommend other appropriate action, including additional training and education.

4. Pastor or Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries is Subject of Allegation of Abuse of Neglect

If any individual has Reasonable Cause to believe that the Pastor has committed sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect involving a child, the individual must notify the Clerk of Session within 24 hours of such belief. If the Clerk is unavailable a member of the response team is to be notified. The Clerk of Session must, within 24 hours following receipt of such report, notify Department of Family and Children Services or the appropriate police authority or district attorney and simultaneously report the matter to the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta.

If any individual suspects but does not have Reasonable Cause to believe that the Pastor has committed sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect involving a child, the individual must notify the Clerk of Session within 24 hours of such suspicion. If the Clerk is unavailable a member of the response team is to be notified. The Clerk of Session must, within 24 hours of receipt of such report, report the matter to the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, which will be responsible for handling the matter and making any reports required by law to Department of Family and Children Services or the appropriate police authority or district attorney.

If the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries is the subject of an allegation of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect involving a child, the allegation will be handled in accordance with this Covenant, except that the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries will not participate on the Response Team during any investigation of the allegation.

Other Procedures Relating to Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect

(a) Documentation of Oral Report. Following an initial oral report by an employee, volunteer, or independent contractor, such employee, volunteer, or independent contractor will document in writing (hard copy only) the date, time, and circumstances of the report on the “Incident Report” (see **Appendix D**). NDPC will maintain the Incident Report in a secure, locked file cabinet.

(b) No Interference with Investigation. To avoid compromising, interfering with, or delaying any future investigation, the employee, volunteer, or independent contractor who makes a report will not engage in questioning the parties to the incident or conducting an independent investigation. The employee or volunteer will take reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of the child.

(c) Report on Investigation. The Pastor or the Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries will notify the employee, volunteer, or independent contractor who initially reported concerns or suspicions regarding the action taken in response to such report.

(d) Full Cooperation with Outside Authorities. NDPC will fully cooperate with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or governmental authorities.

(e) Removal of Accused from Activities. If an accused person is an employee, volunteer, or independent contractor, the person will be required to refrain from participating in all activities with children and youth until determination is made as to whether further action will be taken.

(f) Counseling for Victims. If a child is a victim of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect, NDPC will help identify appropriate counseling for the child.

(g) Report to Session. The Pastor (or the Clerk of Session in the case of reports against the Pastor) will promptly notify the Session on a confidential basis, without revealing the identity of parties, of any reported incident of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect, involving a child or against an employee, member, volunteer, or independent contractor of NDPC and will provide updates and additional information as appropriate.

(h) Spokesperson for Church. The Pastor will either serve as or designate the sole spokesperson to communicate with outside authorities or other persons (including the Session, the congregation, and the media) regarding any reported incident. If the Pastor is the subject of an allegation, all inquiries or requests for information will be directed to and handled by the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta.

Reports to Insurance Company and Presbytery

In addition to the requirements above, NDPC will comply with any requirements to report reported incidents of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical or mental abuse, or neglect involving children who participate in NDPC’s programs, or involving any employee, member, volunteer, or independent contractor of NDPC, to NDPC’s insurer and to Presbytery of Greater Atlanta.