



Child Protection Policy

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
FOUNDATIONS	5
Defining Abuse.....	5
Indicators of Child Sexual Abuse and Child Maltreatment	8
People Who Sexually Abuse Children	11
PROTECTIVE PRACTICES	13
Screening	13
Safe Behaviors.....	13
Routine Protective Measures.....	16
RESPONDING TO POLICY VIOLATIONS AND CHILD ABUSE	19
Policy Violations	19
Limited Access Agreements.....	20
Reporting Abuse.....	21
Independent Reviews	22
SUPPORTING SURVIVORS	23
Abuse Disclosures	23
Ongoing Survivor Support	26
LIVING THE POLICY	29
Training and Dissemination	29
Evaluating and Updating the Policy.....	31
Additional Resources	33

This policy was adopted by the action of the Session of Trinity Presbyterian Church on October 27, 2025.

Introduction

Trinity Presbyterian Church's protection of children should be a multi-pronged approach that reflects that we cherish and love the children God has gifted us (Ps. 127:3). We should seek to be a safe environment for children where they can learn about the Lord (Prov. 22:6; Mark 9:42). We want to model for children how Christians are called to love God and one another (Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 11:1). Further, we protect the reputation of Christ when we seek to protect the children in our care, as it showcases our desire to live in a manner that is above reproach and in line with our faith (Matt. 18:6; Phil. 4:8-9). To that end, we desire to maintain a culture that fosters the safety of every child and young person who walks through the doors of Trinity.

Impact

Though a child's injuries may be hidden from the untrained eye, child sexual abuse and other forms of child maltreatment can result in immediate and/or lasting impact in all realms of the person's well-being (e.g., emotionally, physically, and spiritually). Understanding how child sexual abuse can traumatize the child and have lasting impact in the life of a surviving adult is a critical first step in preventing abuse and responding compassionately. Not every child will display the impact of their maltreatment and not every adult will experience the long-term consequences of their traumatic childhood experience, but all are at increased risk.

Foundations

Defining Abuse

Child

For the purposes of Trinity Presbyterian Church's Child Protection Policy (hereinafter, "the Policy"), a "child" is any person under the age of 18 or one who is entrusted to the care of the Nursery, Children's Ministry, or Student Ministry of Trinity Presbyterian Church, whichever comes last.

Child Sexual Abuse

The Policy defines sexual abuse as physical contact with a sexual or intimate part of the body, or other forms of sexual activity, conducted without consent (see section on "Lack of consent" on page 6 of the Policy), or engaged in for the purpose of sexual gratification or to degrade or abuse.

Physical contact includes:

- ⇒ Touching, grabbing, patting, slapping, pinching, rubbing, fondling, groping, poking, or other forms of contact, whether over or under clothing
- ⇒ Rubbing one's genital area up against another person or touching another person with one's genitals, whether over or under clothing. This includes instances when an individual acts as though the rubbing was inadvertent but was in fact intentional.
- ⇒ Sexual intercourse of any kind

Sexual or intimate body parts include, but are not limited to:

- ⇒ Breasts
- ⇒ Buttocks
- ⇒ Genitals
- ⇒ Groin area
- ⇒ Upper thighs

Other forms of sexual activity include:

- ⇒ Photographing, videotaping, or making any other visual, descriptive, or auditory recording of sexual activity or the sexual or intimate parts of a person's body
- ⇒ Displaying to another any writings, photograph, videotape, or other visual or auditory recording of sexual activity or the sexual or intimate parts of a person's body

Lack of consent includes:

- ⇒ Explicit indication of lack of consent
- ⇒ Physical/verbal force or intimidation, whether express or implicit
- ⇒ Circumstances making it obvious that consent has not been granted, such as:
 - » If one individual is an adult and one individual is a child, since children cannot legally consent to sexual activity with an adult
 - » Being too intoxicated to say “no”
 - » Being asleep
 - » Lack of knowledge of the activity’s occurrence
 - » Otherwise not having the physical or mental capacity to consent

Trinity Presbyterian Church also adopts the definition of “child sexual abuse” found in Tennessee Code Annotated § 37-1-602(3).

Physical Abuse

The Policy defines physical abuse as a non-accidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise harming a child, that is inflicted by a parent, caregiver, or other person who has responsibility for the child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child. Physical discipline, such as spanking or paddling, is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child.

Trinity Presbyterian Church also adopts the definition of “physical abuse” found in Tennessee Code Annotated § 39-15-401(a).

Emotional Abuse

The Policy defines emotional abuse as acts toward a child that cause or have a substantial likelihood of causing harm to the child’s physical, psychological, social, spiritual, or moral development. Emotional abuse might include, but is not limited to, patterns of:

- ⇒ restricting a child’s movement
- ⇒ discrimination (e.g., serving a snack to all the children in a youth group except for one child or one group of children)
- ⇒ blaming
- ⇒ belittling, denigrating, ridiculing, or humiliating

- ⇒ threatening or scaring
- ⇒ unrealistic expectations and demands
- ⇒ other non-physical forms of hostility or bullying

Trinity Presbyterian Church also adopts the definition of “emotional abuse” found in Tennessee Code Annotated § 37-1-102.

Neglect

Trinity Presbyterian Church adopts the definition of “neglect” found in Tennessee Code Annotated § 0250-07-09-.01(10), which states: “Neglect” means the actions or omissions of a parent, relative, guardian, or caregiver which subject a child victim to actual or threatened harm, including, but not limited to, conduct which leads to a child suffering from any of the conditions listed in the definition of “dependent and neglected child” set out in T.C.A. § 37-1-102(b)(13).

Examples of neglect include, but are not limited to:

- ⇒ Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision)
- ⇒ Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment)
- ⇒ Educational (e.g., failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs)
- ⇒ Emotional (e.g., inattention to a child’s emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs)

Spiritual Abuse

The Policy defines child spiritual abuse as abuse administered under the guise of religion.

Examples include:

- ⇒ Use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition, or sacred texts to harm a child
- ⇒ Compelling a child to engage in religious acts against his or her will
- ⇒ Abuse that occurs in a religious context (e.g., church)
- ⇒ Abuse perpetuated by a religious leader (e.g., pastor)
- ⇒ Invocation of divine authority to manipulate a child into meeting the needs of the abuser

Indicators of Child Sexual Abuse and Child Maltreatment

Trinity Presbyterian Church takes all indicators and suspicions of child maltreatment seriously. We are aware of the research on polyvictimization, which tells us that children who are maltreated in one way are at significantly increased risk of being maltreated in multiple ways. Therefore, as our church becomes aware of an indicator or report of a child being maltreated in one way, we will be alert to the possibility that this child might also be maltreated in another way, and we will take steps to protect the child from known risks and be extra attentive to and supportive of the child.

Because the majority of children who are sexually abused will be moderately to severely symptomatic at some point in their life, Trinity Presbyterian Church is familiar with and attentive to potential indicators of child sexual abuse. As the church's front line for children's and youth programming and pastoral counseling, church staff and volunteers have regular opportunities to observe children's behavior, family dynamics, and caregiving styles. They are often privy to the intimate details of congregants' lives. Unlike formal educators, church staff have ongoing contact with the entire family unit and its acquaintances, and as such may be in the unique position to detect child sexual abuse and other forms of child maltreatment.

The following is an inexhaustive list of possible indicators of abuse.

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse if a child has:

- ⇒ Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- ⇒ Difficulty, pain, or blood in the genital area when walking, sitting, or using the bathroom
- ⇒ Discharge from the penis or vagina
- ⇒ Injuries (e.g., bruises, tearing, bleeding), itching, or swelling in the genital, vaginal, or anal area
- ⇒ Urinary tract infections, yeast infections, sexually transmitted diseases
- ⇒ Pregnancy

It is atypical for children to engage in the following sexual behaviors:

- ⇒ Placing mouth on sex part
- ⇒ Asking others to engage in sexual acts
- ⇒ Trying to have intercourse or imitating intercourse
- ⇒ Undressing others, especially if done forcefully
- ⇒ Imitating sexual positions with dolls
- ⇒ Inserting an object into vagina or anus, especially if child continues to do so despite pain
- ⇒ Manually stimulating or having oral or genital contact with pets
- ⇒ Making sexual sounds

⇒ Inserting tongue into mouth when kissing

Emotional or behavioral signs of child sexual abuse may include:

- ⇒ Depression; emotionless or passive behavior; withdrawal from family, friends, church, or school; exhibiting low self-esteem or self-loathing
- ⇒ Lack of attachment to a caregiver; displaying distrust or wariness at the approach of adults, caregivers, or specific people; fear of going home that may manifest by arriving at youth group early, staying late, and appearing frightened or upset when it is time to return home
- ⇒ Being constantly watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- ⇒ Sudden changes in behavior, including academic changes
- ⇒ Extremes in behavior, such as over-compliance, over-achieving or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or behaving more responsibly than would be expected of a child that age
- ⇒ Aggressive, destructive (e.g., fire-setting), demanding, or disruptive behavior; frequent and inexplicable anger, rebellion, or running away
- ⇒ Self-degradation; self-injury (e.g., “cutting”) or wearing long sleeves on hot days (to hide bruising or other injuries); suicide attempts
- ⇒ Delays in emotional, cognitive, physical, or academic development
- ⇒ Unwillingness to change for or participate in certain youth department activities such as a gym night or swim program
- ⇒ Being inappropriately adult (e.g., parenting other children) or infantile (e.g., rocking or head-banging)
- ⇒ Bed-wetting in children who have previously outgrown it; nightmares; difficulty sleeping
- ⇒ Exhibiting high anxiety, including through physical problems associated with anxiety, such as chronic stomach pain or headaches
- ⇒ Frequent, unexplained absences at school

Consider the possibility of physical abuse if you notice:

- ⇒ Frequent injuries of any kind (e.g., bruises, cuts, fractures, burns)
- ⇒ Especially if the child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the cause of injury
- ⇒ These injuries may appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, or cigarette burns, or impressions of other instruments
- ⇒ Pay particular attention to injuries that present on both sides of the head or body, as accidental injuries typically only affect one side of the body

Consider the possibility of neglect if a child:

- ⇒ Is obviously malnourished, listless, or fatigued

- ⇒ Begg, teal, or hoard food or complain frequently of hunger
- ⇒ Is consistently dirty or ha severe body odor
- ⇒ Lack sufficient clothing for the weather
- ⇒ Ha untreated illness, injuries, or health (e.g., unfilled cavities) or serious educational need
- ⇒ Ha broken or missing eyeglasses, hearing aid, or other necessary aids or equipment
- ⇒ Ha an untreated need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- ⇒ Stay at school outside of school hour
- ⇒ Is frequently absent or ha significant academic struggle
- ⇒ Is inappropriately left unsupervised
- ⇒ Abuse alcohol or other drug

People Who Sexually Abuse Children

People who sexually abuse children utilize authority, trust, or physical force/threats to gain access and control over children so they can perpetrate the abuse. The three primary categories of people who sexually abuse children are the stranger, the acquaintance, and the intra-familial offender.

Stranger offenders are people that the child has never seen, or people with whom the child has had only minimal prior interactions. Stranger offenders secure access and control over children with authority, trust, and physical force/threats but most frequently utilize physical force/threats and are the smallest category of offenders.

Acquaintance offenders are non-family members—such as a family friend, clergy member, next-door neighbor, pediatrician, teacher, or church volunteer—who is acquainted with the child or the child’s parents. Acquaintance offenders generally prefer to leverage trust to gain access and control. To secure this trust, the acquaintance offender grooms child victims by providing a variety of services and gifts, including but not limited to attention, affection, kindness, privileges, recognition, alcohol, drugs, money, and pornography. The trust that develops as a result of the grooming process will often reduce the child’s inhibitions and increase the offender’s control over the child. This toxic trust eventually renders the child virtually helpless, creating an environment for ongoing abuse, while increasing the likelihood that the victim will remain silent.

Intra-familial offenders are related to the victim and are people who usually, but not always, live in the same house as the victim. The intra-familial offender is generally considered the largest of the three child molester categories. Because of greater accessibility, intra-familial victims tend to be overall younger than non-familial victims. The primary challenge for the intra-familial molester is not access, but the ability to exert sufficient control in order to both abuse and silence the victim. A seemingly greater correlation and interplay exists between the use of trust, authority, and physical force utilized by the intra-familial offender.

Protective Practices

Screening

Trinity Presbyterian Church aims to hire employees and recruit volunteers to work with children who fit our vision, theology, values, and standards. In keeping with our values of protecting the children in our care, as we hire employees or recruit volunteers, Trinity will require written applications, background checks, internet/social media searches, reference checks, and interviews. Additionally, no one may serve in the Nursery, Children's Ministry, or Student Ministry until he/she has regularly attended Trinity Presbyterian Church for at least six months. Screening will be required for all employees and officers and any volunteers serving with Trinity's nursery, children, and youth ministries.

Trinity requires the following screening procedures:

- ⇒ The completion of a written application
- ⇒ A background check that includes the following information:
 - » Countywide Criminal Search in current and previous places of residence
 - » Multistate Criminal Search
 - » National Sex Offender Registry
 - » SSN Trace
 - » Automatic re-verification of records and possible records
- ⇒ Internet/social media searches
- ⇒ At least two references to be contacted. These references should include:
 - » Previous churches and employers
 - » Personal references if the applicant is under eighteen
- ⇒ An interview that explores a candidate's written application and introduces the child protection policy to the candidate

If the screening process yields information that an individual abused a child in any way or has been convicted of a violent and/or sexual crime, that individual may not work with children in any capacity, and Trinity Presbyterian Church will contact a child protection expert about how to proceed. If the screening process shows that a candidate has ever been accused of a violent and/or sexual crime OR convicted of any other type of crime, Trinity will consult with a child protection expert to assess the situation.

Safe Behaviors

Because most child abuse happens in isolated situations and because most adults seeking to harm a child prefer to do so in private, our church requires at least two adults to be present at and supervise all children's and youth events, included but not limited to Nursery and childcare,

Christian Education, Midweek Gathering activities, Drama Camp, parties, special events, fellowship gatherings, and retreats.

No child or group of children, youth or group of youth will ever be alone with one adult. All interactions between children/youth and adults must be observable and interruptible by other adults. When adults spend time with a child, the adults will inform both the child's caregiver and their supervisor of each meeting. The adult and child will meet at a time and place where the caregiver or supervisor can interrupt the time or observe the time from a distance. Furthermore, the meeting will take place at a public place with high visibility.

Trinity Presbyterian Church prohibits the following:

- » Sexually or physically abusive touch
- » Touching a child's thighs, stomach, or back
- » Corporal punishment
- » Any touch that is unwanted by a child
- » Lap sitting
- » Tickling
- » Playing with hair
- » Full frontal hugs

Trinity Presbyterian Church desires to show healthy affection to its children through the following:

- » Displays of affection that are observable and interruptible
- » Kind words
- » High fives
- » Pats on the shoulder
- » Side hugs

Restroom Rules

Children in the Nursery (0-3) and Pre-K/Kindergarten classes will use the in-room restrooms. If a child in either of those classes requires assistance in the restroom, the door to the restroom must remain propped open during assistance. One worker can assist the child while the other adult tends to the other children. Children in the 1st through 6th grade classes can use the restrooms at the front or back of church building. Children in the 4th grade or younger may not walk to the restroom alone but must be escorted by an appointed adult. The appointed adult shall not be inside the restroom with the child but should wait outside of the restroom door. Teachers should notify the hall monitor on duty when a child needs the restroom. In emergencies only, meaning a hall monitor cannot be found, and the child's need for the restroom is imminent, teachers may escort children to the

restroom. If this is necessary, the teacher that remains in the room with the other children must prop their door open and alert the teachers next door. The teachers next door then must keep their door open until the other teacher returns to the class. Children in the 5th and 6th grades may go to the restroom either at the front or back of the building by themselves.

Diaper Changes

Men may not change diapers or accompany children inside the restroom. A fresh disposable changing pad should be placed on the changing table before each diaper change. Anyone changing diapers should wear gloves and change gloves between each diaper change.

Precautions for Specific Events

For events which present unique circumstances for which additional, specific safe behaviors are needed (e.g., retreats, camps, etc.), the responsible ministry leader will present a plan to the Session for approval.

Extra Attention

- » Staff and volunteers are prohibited from displaying favoritism toward a child or group of children.
- » Staff and volunteers may not give gifts to individual children unless the gifts are:
 - Able to be given to other children at other times for similar reasons (e.g., gifts to graduating seniors; a new Bible for students entering middle school; end of the year thank-you gifts to older children who volunteered in the nursery)
 - Given together with another staff member or volunteer
 - A personal gift from a staff member or volunteer that meets social expectations and does not signify preferential treatment
- » In cases where staff or volunteers believe that a child would benefit from extra attention:
 - Staff and volunteers should be able to articulate a clear reason for providing extra attention to a child that focuses on the child's needs, not staff needs.
 - Staff and volunteers must receive authorization from a supervisor before providing extra attention to a child. In cases where there is no supervisor (e.g., the staff member is a senior pastor), staff should alert a colleague of the plan and request that the colleague function in the role of a supervisor.
 - When possible, supervisors might organize a rotation of staff and volunteers so that extra attention is not provided solely by one individual.
 - Staff and volunteers providing extra attention must always abide by the Policy (e.g., meet in observable and interruptible spaces).
 - Supervisors should occasionally drop by unexpectedly during outings or meetings.

- Supervisors should periodically reevaluate the situation to determine if extra attention is still necessary.

Sexual Language

Trinity Presbyterian Church acknowledges that sexual language is more than mere jokes, but a serious boundary violation. As such, the following are prohibited:

- » Sexually suggestive language, racy jokes, sexual innuendo, descriptions of sexual experiences/habits
- » Uploading, downloading, or viewing pornography
- » Music, video games, and movies with sexual themes

If the church staff or volunteers want to give a lecture or organize a program to help youth understand age-appropriate questions about their body or sexuality, the event must be planned and approved in advance and parents notified beforehand. When children or teens raise questions about their body or sexuality, Trinity Presbyterian Church volunteers and staff will answer the question at hand in an age-appropriate way and inform a supervisor.

Trinity Presbyterian Church encourages positive verbal interactions, including:

- » Encouragement
- » Kind words
- » Positive reinforcement
- » Appropriate jokes

Routine Protective Measures

Registration Form

Registration forms will be required annually for each child or student participating in the Nursery, Children's Ministry, or Student Ministry of Trinity Presbyterian Church. At a minimum the registration form shall include the following information:

- » Who may pick up a child from a church event
- » Any allergies the child has
- » Any medical concerns
- » Doctor to contact in case of emergency

Child Pick-Up

The following events will require a parent or adult caregiver to sign their child out from the event. Children may not pick up siblings from these events. A parent must notify the teacher or volunteer in advance if someone other than the one who dropped off the child will be picking them up. Children will not be released to anyone who has not been specifically approved by the parent to the teacher/volunteer.

- » Nursery/childcare
- » Children's Christian Education [Nursery-4th grade]
- » Children's ministry events
- » Drama Camp

Additional Measures

Greeters and hall monitors will be designated to:

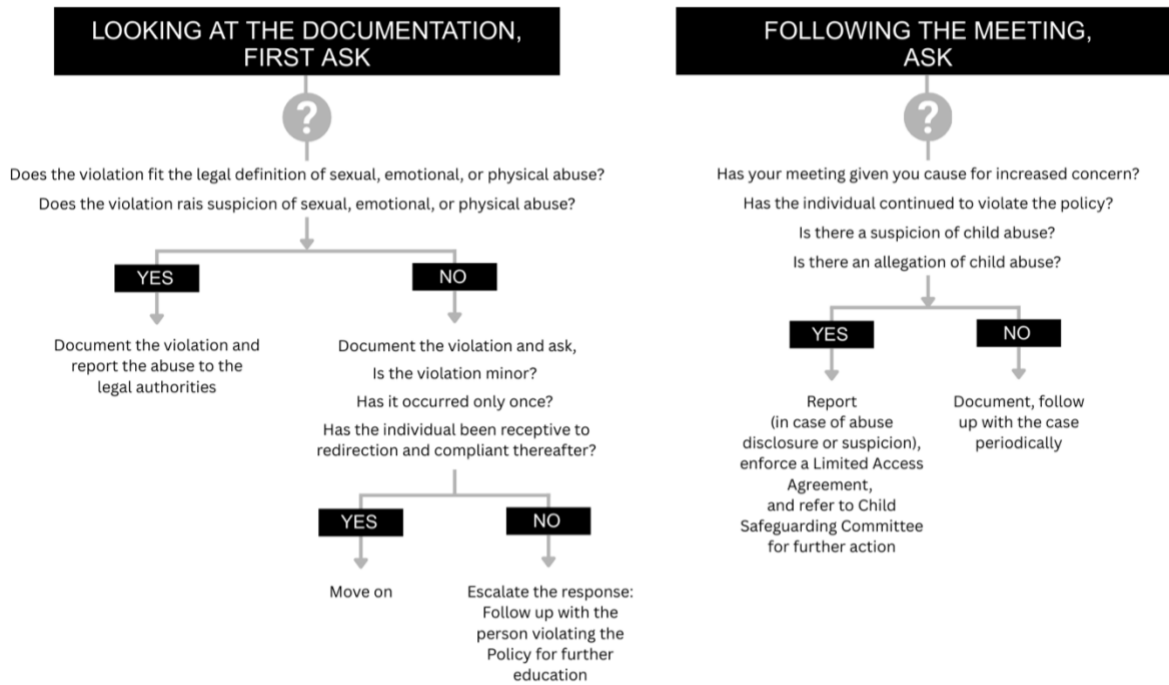
- » Lock unused closets and rooms (children should not be in classrooms when classes are not in session)
- » Spot-check classrooms
- » Help with visitor registration

Responding to Policy Violations and Child Abuse

Policy Violations

Trinity Presbyterian Church takes Policy violations seriously. Any staff, volunteer, parent, or church member who witnesses a violation is expected to respond in an appropriate way. Trinity Presbyterian Church expects all adults to practice bystander intervention when they see a Policy violation. For example, if an adult witnesses another adult tickling a child, they should alert the offending adult of their mistake in violating the policy and report the violation to the Children's Ministry Director or Pastor in charge of Student Ministry.

Church leaders will respond to Policy violations according to the following:



Policy exceptions should be rare. Trinity Presbyterian Church allows Policy exceptions that are preapproved by the Child Safeguarding Committee for emergencies. All exceptions should be documented.

Limited Access Agreements

Trinity Presbyterian Church utilizes Limited Access Agreements to clarify safe behavior around children for community members who have:

- » engaged in concerning or risky behavior
- » violated the Policy repeatedly
- » offenses that are not related to children (e.g., stealing, drug use, DUI, etc.)

A Limited Access Agreement is a written and agreed-upon boundary between an individual and Trinity Presbyterian Church wherein we outline specific concerns about an individual's behavior, detail appropriate behavior toward children, and plan ongoing accountability for the individual. Limited Access Agreements apply to members of a church community. They do not apply to known offenders or church staff members.

If a convicted offender wants to join Trinity Presbyterian Church's community, we will contact a child protection expert on how to best interact with a known sex offender. Similarly, if an individual has been credibly accused of child sexual abuse or any form of child maltreatment but has not yet been or was not convicted, we will contact a child protection expert on how to best proceed.

If a staff member violates the Policy, they may be subject to termination at the discretion of the Session.

Reporting Abuse

The abuse of children is a grave sin and a serious crime. When adults report suspected child abuse to the legal authorities, their report could save a child's life. In contrast, silence about suspected abuse brings incredible harm to victims and emboldens offenders. Trinity Presbyterian Church encourages its members, who are all considered mandated reporters in the state of Tennessee, to contact the authorities immediately when a child discloses abuse, when they witness child abuse, or when they observe signs of abuse.

After reporting suspected abuse to the authorities, members should notify the Children's Ministry Director or the Pastor in charge of Student Ministry, who will report the information to church leadership.

Abuse Reporting Contacts

Tennessee Department of Children's Services	www.tn.gov/dcs
Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline	(877) 237-0004
Rutherford County Sheriff	(616) 898-7777
Murfreesboro Police Dept	(615) 849-2673

If you suspect a child is in immediate danger, you should call 911 to report the emergency.

Independent Reviews

Under the following circumstances, Trinity Presbyterian Church will consult with a child protection expert to determine if an independent review should be pursued:

1. When a suspicion of child maltreatment is reported to the civil authorities and they decline to investigate or prosecute the alleged abuses.
2. A district attorney has not pursued legal prosecution because no suspected criminal behavior is reported; however, the Child Safeguarding Committee believes the individual's behavior might still violate the church policy, be immoral, be inappropriate, or be unsafe.

If an investigation is deemed necessary, Trinity Presbyterian Church will retain an organization that meets the following criteria:

1. Completely independent of Trinity Presbyterian Church
2. Experienced in proper investigation techniques
3. Up-to-date on child maltreatment research

Supporting Survivors

Abuse Disclosures

Because children and adult survivors are reluctant to disclose abuse, Trinity Presbyterian Church acknowledges that survivors who choose to do so need our community's utmost support.

When children disclose, they almost always do so tentatively or by accident, and may later recant even when there is proof that the abuse occurred. If questioned directly, many child victims may deny the abuse. When children disclose intentionally, children may first test the adult's reaction by pretending that the abuse happened to a friend or by supplying only a small bit of information. If a child discloses abuse to you, the following are helpful tips on how to respond in the moment:

- » Stay calm.
- » Show love and respect for the child.
- » Thank the child for telling you and praise the child's courage.
- » If the child expresses guilt or concerns about getting in trouble, reassure the child that no matter what happened he or she is not to blame.
- » If the child expresses concerns about not being believed, reassure the child that you believe him/her.
- » Allow the child to talk freely; do not interrupt, ask the child to repeat words, or probe for details. Use open-ended questions such as "What happened next?" or "Tell me more."
- » Do not offer false assurances, such as promising to keep the child's disclosure secret.
- » Let the child know what to expect next and incorporate their input where possible.
- » Protect the child immediately from the suspected offender.
- » Report the abuse to authorities and the Children's Ministry Director or Pastor in charge of Student Ministry, who will inform the church leadership.
- » Document the disclosure and your report.
- » To protect the child's right to privacy and potential criminal process, avoid the urge to turn indiscriminately to colleagues, friends, or family for advice. Instead turn to professionals experienced in handling cases of child sexual abuse and to carefully selected church leaders who can provide assistance and support to the child and you.

Receiving an adult’s abuse disclosure is an honor, not a burden; it is a sign of trust. Victims often choose to disclose their abuse years, even decades, after it occurred. Trinity Presbyterian Church encourages anyone receiving an adult’s abuse disclosure to be guided by the following responses:

DO Say	DON’T Say
Thank you for telling me.	Why are you telling me this?
I’m glad you’re safe now.	Why didn’t you _____ (scream/stop him, etc.)?
You did the right thing _____ (asking for help/telling me/reporting the abuse, etc.)	What do you mean when you say he abused you? What exactly did he do?
I’m glad you’re talking with me.	Tell me more details about what happened.
I’m sorry this happened to you. How can I help?	Why did he do that to you? Had you done something to make him think that was okay?
Take as much time as you need.	You need to forgive and move on.
Things may never be the same, but they can get better.	Don’t worry, it’s going to be all right.
I am here.	It’ll take some time, but you’ll get over it.
I stand with you. This congregation stands with you.	Calm down and try to relax.
	Try to be strong.
	It was so long ago, why are you still letting your abuser win by hanging on to it? Let it go.
<i>The following should only be said if the victim indicates these concerns are on his/her mind.</i>	
It is okay to be angry.	You should get on with your life.
It is okay to still love your abuser.	Time heals all wounds.
It’s understandable you’re feeling that way.	Out of tragedies good things happen.

DO Say	DON'T Say
Your reaction is not an uncommon response.	You're lucky that _____ didn't happen.
You're not going crazy. These are normal reactions following an assault.	It was God's will. I know how you feel.
I believe you.	Perhaps you misunderstood...
It wasn't your fault.	Better to receive punishment in this world than in the next.

Ongoing Survivor Support

The purpose of this Policy is to prevent occurrences of child abuse. Yet we understand that no matter how hard we try to protect children, there will always be some individuals seeking to harm them. If Trinity Presbyterian Church becomes aware that a child has been, or is suspected to have been, abused, they will take the following steps to clearly communicate support for the child and the child's family:

Terminate/Suspend. Immediately suspend or terminate the alleged perpetrator of abuse from any church positions s/he may hold, pending the results of an investigation. Assign a liaison to maintain contact with the alleged perpetrator.

Support Person. A member of the church's leadership will be designated as a "Support Person(s)" and will reach out to the child and the child's family within twenty-four hours of learning of the abuse to express the church's unequivocal support. Understanding that abuse can have ongoing impact on a child and a child's family, the Support Person will seek permission from the child and the child's family to continue offering support on an ongoing basis. This support will include:

- » Showing up
- » Listening
- » Affirming
- » Offering to accompany the child/family in filing a police report, meeting with Child Protective Services, to court hearings or trial and other related meetings, interviews, or hearings
- » Asking the child and the child's family how else the church can offer support

Support People will understand the limitations of their role and will not offer therapeutic, legal, or other expert advice, but will instead function as members of a multidisciplinary team, working when possible to support and complement the efforts of involved professionals to support the child and family. For instance, a child who has been abused may have theological questions or experience spiritual injuries, but at the same time, may find comfort in spirituality, prayer, and other forms of religious engagement. The pastor has a unique role to fill here and will make himself available to provide regular ongoing pastoral support to the child and the child's family.

Support People will be careful to avoid causing further harm, and under no circumstances—even when the abuse is alleged and not proven—will Support Individuals:

- » place any portion of the blame for the abuse on the child or the child's family
- » probe for intimate details of the abuse
- » express disbelief of the child

- » attempt to silence the child or the child’s family in any way or for any reason
- » encourage noncompliance with the law
- » express support for the perpetrator
- » urge reconciliation with or forgiveness of the perpetrator

Mental Health Treatment. The church will offer to help the family find a qualified mental health practitioner with expertise treating victims of abuse and their family members. If the family requires assistance paying for mental health treatment, the church will offer to subsidize such treatment or connect the family to resources that may be able to assist in this regard. In the event that the child is found to have been abused by a church employee, volunteer, or other individual serving in an official capacity, or that the church was negligent or otherwise complicit in allowing the abuse to happen, the church will reimburse the entire cost of treatment for the child and the child’s family members.

Public Support. The church commits to protecting the privacy of all victims of child abuse. We also understand that all too often child victims of abuse are publicly marginalized while communities rally to protect abusers. In the event that a victim of abuse is publicly attacked or disparaged for the abuse or their response to the abuse, the church leadership will—with the victim’s permission—make a public statement denouncing and prohibiting such treatment of the victim and urge the community to offer support instead. If the disparagement occurs privately, the church leadership will communicate the same message privately to the relevant individuals.

Creating a Culture of Ongoing Support for Victims of Childhood Abuse. Our church aims to create a space that is safe for all victims of childhood abuse—both those we know about and those we don’t. To this end, the church will:

- » Create and distribute a referral list of local organizations and therapists who specialize in sexual abuse prevention and treatment
- » Post signs throughout the church building about child abuse prevention and reporting
- » Provide information about support groups for adults who have experienced childhood abuse
- » Publicize the Policy, communicating that this institution takes child protection seriously and does not tolerate abuse
- » Speak about child abuse publicly often
 - Annual teaching by the pastor on this topic
 - Initiate communal dialogue
 - Post the contact information for church leaders who are available to answer any questions about child safety

Living the Policy

Training and Dissemination

This Policy shall be disseminated widely to the church community through publications, public discussion, educational opportunities, teaching, training programs, and other appropriate means of communication that will raise awareness and create a safe environment for our children. Specifically, the most current version of our Policy shall be:

- » posted on the church website
- » readily available in the church office, lobby, and nursery
- » communicated to every member semi-annually via email
- » included in new-member packets
- » summarized and posted on the walls in the children's and youth wings
- » incorporated into a teaching delivered annually by a pastor

The church requires that all staff, volunteers working with children, and church leaders complete an annual child safeguarding training provided through Protect My Ministry.

The church requires that all staff, volunteers working with children, and church leaders annually sign an affirmation indicating that they have completed the required child safeguarding training and read and agree to abide by the terms of this Policy. Affirmations will be stored in the church's office files.

Evaluating and Updating the Policy

This Policy shall be evaluated and updated every five (5) years by the Trinity Presbyterian Church's Child Safeguarding Committee and approved by the Session.

This Policy was last reviewed by the Ad Interim Child Protection Policy Committee on ***September 6, 2025***:

Rev. Ryan Hudson, *Assistant Pastor, Teaching Elder*

Dr. Phil Newman, *Physician, Ruling Elder*

Ms. Sherry Nowlin, *Children's Ministry Director*

Ms. Kelley Pellegrin, *Nursery Coordinator*

Mr. Brent Pierce, *Attorney, Deacon*

Ms. Mary Thompson, *LMFT*

Ms. Katie Whisenant, *Speech Language Pathologist*

This policy was adopted by the action of the Session of Trinity Presbyterian Church on ***October 27, 2025***.

Additional Resources

The Ad Interim Child Protection Policy Committee consulted the following additional resources in developing this Policy:

- ⇒ Presbyterian Church in America Ad Interim Committee on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault, *Addressing Abuse: A Theological and Practical Guide*, Presbyterian Church in America, 2022.
- ⇒ Tchividjian, Basyle and Shira M. Berkovits, *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches and Ministries*, New Growth Press, 2017.



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