



***Germantown Presbyterian Church  
Safe Practices Policy***

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***Safe Practices Policy***  
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# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Introduction**

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."* Matthew 19:14

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*  
John 10:11

We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. **Germantown Presbyterian Church** believes the spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing of children is vital. Moreover, the church must deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. Therefore, **Germantown Presbyterian Church** has implemented a Safe Practices Policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. This policy is intended to ensure that church activities involving children are consistent with the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition of nurturing vulnerable children. We pray for God's blessing for our children, workers, and church.

## **Purpose**

The Safe Practices Policy is intended to reduce the risk of abuse or injury to infants, children, and youth who participate in our programs. The Policy is about stewardship of one of God's great gifts—children and teens. The objectives of this Safe Practices Policy include:

- Educating church leaders and youth ministry workers about prevention of abuse or accidental injury
- Enabling church leaders and ministry workers to develop procedures and practices that reduce these risks
- Protecting adults from mistaken or groundless allegations
- Reducing liability for churches
- Building parental confidence in church programs
- Preparing church workers to respond should an incident or accident occur

## **Organization**

This following section of the Safe Practices Policy provides the guidelines for the administration of the policy and associated programs. Appendix A contains Personnel Documents and Appendix B contains operating documents required to satisfy the requirements of the policy. A glossary of terms can be found in Appendix C.

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## **Program Administration**

### **Ongoing Supervision of the Child Safety Program**

The **SESSION OF GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** will appoint one person to supervise the child safety program. This program shall govern all church activities that involve custody of children and teens less than 18 years of age.

### **Annual Review of Safety Program**

Each program leader will review compliance with safety policies and potential risks annually in a brief written report that will be given to the person responsible for the child safety program.

The reports should include:

- A listing of any new programs or program changes and the additional risks these changes may incur.
- Completed Child Protection Audit
- A summary of policy violations and the program leader's response to these violations.

Any patterns of violations that suggest policy changes are needed should be identified. The supervisor will summarize the reports received from program leaders and submit an overall report annually to the Session of the church.

### **Waiver of Policies**

Church policies may be waived occasionally for exceptional circumstances. The goal of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** is to promote safety while maintaining practical flexibility in children's and youth ministry. Waiving policies will be authorized by approval of a quorum of the Session if such waiver is recommended by the Head of Staff or the Director of Congregational Ministries.

### **Modification of Policies**

Changes in these policies must be approved by the **SESSION OF GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**. These policies may be modified or withdrawn by the **SESSION OF GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** at any time. These policies are not intended to create an implied or express contract with any person. They are not intended to create a legally enforceable or binding promise or representation.

### **Activities Covered by These Policies**

All activities of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** that require church workers acting within the scope of their duties to have custody of persons less than 18 years of age shall follow these policies.

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## **Operating Policies for All Children's and Youth Ministries**

### **Statement of Purpose**

As a church, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing of children is vital. This policy is intended to ensure that church activities involving children are consistent with the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition of nurturing vulnerable children.

The primary purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and youth by providing clear instructions about the operation of children's and youth ministries at **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**. The leaders of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** sincerely request the cooperation of the adults in our church who must abide by the stringent guidelines of this policy.

### **Child and Youth Safety Takes Priority**

The greatest priority of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** children's and youth programs is to help kids through the Gospel and ministry of Jesus Christ. It is obvious that any sexual exploitation, abuse, or endangerment directly contradicts this priority and the values of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**.

Workers and supervisors who oversee youth workers must keep this priority in mind: adults do not have a right to serve as workers. Adults merely have an **opportunity** to serve when selected by the church. This means that workers should err on the side of caution as they make subjective decisions involving the wellbeing of children and youth.

### **A Higher Standard**

As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we must strive to be worthy of a very high standard of trust. For this reason, every worker at **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** must avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behavior. All workers must diligently avoid any conduct that appears wrong to a reasonable observer, even if no actual misconduct takes place.

### **Policy Standards and General Christian Moral Standards**

Workers in children's and youth ministry are expected to observe these policies and guidelines as well as the other Christian standards of moral behavior.

### **Supervision of Children's and Ministry Workers**

#### *Adequate Supervision of Youth Workers*

Church staff and volunteers who supervise youth workers are charged with the diligent enforcement of these policies. Violation of these policies is grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from youth work for both volunteers and staff, at the discretion of the church. Supervisors and all youth workers who suspect any unhealthy or abusive activities must discuss their suspicions promptly with the youth pastor or Head of Staff.

#### *Worker to Child Ratios*

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**GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children whenever feasible. These ratios are goals. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of children attending an event.

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>WORKERS</b>	<b>CHILDREN</b>
Nursery	2	12
Sunday School	2	16
Youth Programs	2	20
Midweek Programs	2	14
Vacation Bible School	2	16

## **Touching Policy**

Child abuse is a reality in our society. **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** has implemented a touching policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone working with children and youth.

1. Hugging, kisses and other forms of appropriate physical affection between workers and children are important for a child's development and are generally suitable in our church setting.
2. Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth. (For example, it is generally appropriate for a four-year-old to sit in a nursery worker's lap and give a kiss on the cheek, but it is not appropriate for a teenager and youth leader to behave this way.)
3. Touching should be initiated by the child or youth. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need.
4. Touching and affection should only be given when in the presence of other children's ministry or youth workers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present and the touching is open to observation. This rule is especially important when diapering a baby or helping a young child change clothes or use the restroom.
5. Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers, our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach.
6. A child's preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant child.
7. Church workers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.
8. Church workers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with their ministry leader or a pastor.

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## **Worker Selection and Supervision**

The following guidelines will be used as **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** reviews applicants for positions in children's or youth ministry:

### **Minimum Age**

All workers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but they may not take the place of adult workers.

### **Confidential Interviews**

All applicants must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do. Interviews will be conducted by the leader of the program in which the applicant will work or by other persons designated by the program leader. A team of interviewers may be used. Church policy and guidelines should be discussed during the interview.

### **SixMonth Rule**

Applicants must have been a member of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** or a regular attendee of the church for at least six months. This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the applicant allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of an applicant for youth work. In some situations this rule is not feasible and may be waived (such as church employees or interns who are not church members). If the sixmonth rule is waived, program leaders may take additional steps to screen the applicant at their own discretion.

### **Application Forms**

Applicants must complete and sign an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.

### **Criminal Background Check**

*A criminal background check is required* for primary worker positions. The criminal background check is *optional* for secondary worker applicants at the option of the leader of the program in which they will work.

### **References**

Church leaders will check **at least** three references for each worker. The references will be done by phone, mail, or in person. Whenever possible, the three references should include: one person who has known the applicant well for an extended period of time, a former supervisor, and a member of the applicant's immediate family. For applicants for compensated positions, additional former supervisors may be checked. The "Children's and Youth Worker Reference" form will be filled out by the person conducting the phone reference check.

### **Auto Safety**

Persons who will drive vehicles for conducting church business or transporting children on a regular basis must complete an "Auto Safety" form. This rule is at the discretion of the appropriate ministry leader. It is not necessary for people who will not transport youth.

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## **First Aid Training**

Church employees who supervise young people must maintain current certification in basic first aid and basic CPR (or their equivalent if other is offered in the church's locality). Costs for this training will be paid by the church. Employees will be paid for attending training. New employees must get this certification within 90 days of the start of their employment. Nursery workers and others serving young children may also want training in infant and toddler CPR. Other workers are encouraged, but not required, to get training if they frequently accompany kids on adventure activities: water sports, camping, homebuilding mission trips, etc.

## **Signatures on Guidelines**

All applicants must agree by signature that they understand the guidelines pertaining to their positions and that they agree to abide by them. This requirement will be met by having applicants sign the printed "Guidelines" forms that are appropriate to their position. Staff members or volunteers who work with several ministry areas should sign the appropriate form for each ministry area.

## **Confidentiality of Information**

The church will keep confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Selection information will be marked as such and stored with limited access afforded only to church staff and others with a need to know.

## **Delays in Receiving Information**

While the church is waiting for background information and references, applicants may begin working in contact with children. During this time only closely supervised work should be done by the applicant. Failure to receive satisfactory responses in a timely manner may result in dismissal or withdrawal of the offer to work with the youth ministry program.

## **Classification of Workers According to Their Duties**

In order to screen workers appropriately to their responsibilities, **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** will categorize workers into two categories: primary and secondary. Please note that the terms primary and secondary do not refer to the ages of children served, but rather to relative levels of responsibility and risk.

*Primary workers* All paid staff and those volunteers in roles with greater responsibility or risk should be classified as primary workers and should meet the primary screening standards. Primary workers have greater interaction with and access to children, and more opportunity to harm children, so churches must take extra care in their screening.

*Secondary workers* Secondary workers are people who occasionally interact with minors and/or do so in less risky circumstances. For example, a volunteer who sees children only in a group setting, on church premises, and with a ministry leader present may be classified as a secondary worker. This category may include parents of participants who supervise activities.

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## **Recommended Screening Requirements for Primary and Secondary Workers**

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
SixMonth Rule (may be waived for employees and interns)	Yes	Yes
Application Form	Yes	Yes
Records Request Authorization	Yes	Optional
References	3 or more	2 or more
Confidential Interview	Indepth	Brief
Criminal/Court Records Background Check	Yes	Optional
Child Abuse Registry (if available in your state)	Yes	Optional
Auto Safety Form	Yes*	Yes*
Guidelines (signed) and Job Description	Yes	Yes

*\* If operating a vehicle for church business.*

***Applicants who receive favorable criminal background screening reports will be notified in writing that the screening is complete and favorable.***

### **Procedures for “Red Flag” Alerts in background screening process:**

In the event that a criminal background screening results in a “red flag” alert, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The Director of Congregational Ministries will notify the Head of Staff as to the nature of the alert. Each alert will be considered on an individual basis regarding the individual’s ability to continue working with children/youth and if so, in what capacity.
2. Depending on the nature of the report and the details surrounding it, the Director of Congregational Ministries and Head of Staff will consult with the Advocacy/Implementation team.
3. Certain driving infractions could result in the individual not being allowed to drive children/youth.
4. Any crime of sexual nature will be cause for immediate consultation with the individual and said individual will be subject to immediate termination of role with children/youth.
5. Other legal infractions will also be cause for consultation with the individual and may also result in termination of role with children/youth.

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## **Guidelines for Interviewing Applicants**

### **Red Flags**

***Red flags alone do not mean that an individual is a potential danger to youth.*** But they are possible indicators that an individual may participate in unhealthy relationships with children or even be a child molester. Red flags are signals for program leaders to consider the applicant more carefully, to look a bit deeper into his or her background, and to be especially careful in making decisions to approve or disapprove the applicant.

**A specific interest in a certain age group or gender.** Child molesters who are often the victims of molestation sometimes fixate on children of the same age they were when first molested.

**Overinvolvement with children and youth.** Excessive activity with youth may indicate a person is fixated on youth, lacks adult outlets for recreation, or is seeking access to youth in a variety of programs.

**Lack of adult relationships.** Healthy workers have adult relationships for friendships and, when appropriate, for romantic reasons. They do not need to turn to youth to meet their basic need for relationships.

**Lack of adult interests.** Interest in adult hobbies and in adult groups shows that youth workers have balanced lives that are not overly concentrated on children.

**Instability in work and life.** Look out for people who move or change jobs frequently and do not have a plausible explanation for it. Child molesters often move from place to place as people become suspicious or to seek out new opportunities to molest children. Instability in work may mean that an applicant has a drug or an alcohol problem.

**Gaps in a person's life history.** A unexplained gap in a resume or history may mean that the applicant served a prison term or is covering up a difficult time in his or her life.

**A history of abuse or family instability.** A person who experienced abuse or family problems while growing up may have unresolved emotional issues. These issues can interfere in their ability to work with children. Also, child abuse often occurs in unstable families facing problems with alcohol/drugs, mental illness, extreme poverty, etc.

**Stressful events in the applicant's recent past.** Events such as the death of a close family member, divorce, marital problems, unemployment, etc., often cause stress. This stress can lead applicants to react in unhealthy ways.

**Evasive or misleading answers.** Dishonesty is an indicator that a person is not trustworthy enough for working with kids and may be hiding vital information.

**Rigidity in belief or doctrines.** Applicants may have strong beliefs, but they should demonstrate flexibility in dealing with different points of view and accepting people as they are. A larger than expected proportion of child abusers come from rigid, orthodox backgrounds that encourage a one-dimensional perspective on important issues. Be

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cautious with applicants who have an overly strong, personal agenda for youth. Look out for statements such as “I want to train children to believe in God just like I do” or “Children today are spoiled, so I want to teach them the strong discipline I grew up with.”

## **What To Look For**

- Applicants with a clear explanation of why they want to work with youth.
- Applicants with wellbalanced lifestyles involving work, family, friends, recreation, and spiritual growth.
- Applicants who have demonstrated maturity and people skills over the long term in their life experiences.
- Applicants who are open to differences in people, flexible in dealing with people, and have a sense of humor.
- Applicants who demonstrate appropriate reactions to stress.
- Applicants who understand the need for screening and supervision and who react to it positively rather than defensively.

## **Interview Questions**

Start the interview with a reminder that “information will not be disclosed to unauthorized people.” Begin with light questions and ask the more personal ones as the applicant relaxes.

1. Tell me about your family when you were growing up.
2. What were your family’s religious beliefs when you were a child?
3. Tell me about your hobbies and interests outside of church.
4. What is the biggest problem in children’s lives right now? (Look for a coherent, wellreasoned answer that demonstrates the applicant has thought about kids’ problems.)
5. Give me a brief rundown of your life. (Follow up with questions to address where they grew up, their childhood, education, work experience, churches they have been a member of, job and residence changes, etc.)
6. Tell me about other work with children you have done.
7. Is there anything else I should know about you that might affect how you work with children at **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH?**

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## **Training Strategies for Prevention of Abuse**

### **Outcry Training for Children and Parents**

**GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** will institute outcry training for kindergarten-age children and above and their parents. The objectives of outcry training are to enable kids or parents to:

- recognize abuse,
- resist abuse,
- report abuse or attempted abuse, and
- reduce the shame, stigma, and confusion with open discussion, clear information, and unconditional support for children.

### **Training for Children's and Youth Ministry Workers**

**GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** will train workers annually to keep young people safe. This training is mandatory for children's and youth ministry workers and other church workers who may work with children's and youth ministry. The training will be offered to incoming workers. Refresher training will also be offered to veteran workers. The training will include the following information:

1. the nature of the problem, especially child sexual abuse
2. recognition of child abuse indicators in children and in adults who may be abusers
3. verbal and written explanation of policies and rules that apply to each category of worker
4. discussion of expectations
  - avoiding the appearance of misconduct
  - monitoring coworkers' behavior
  - accountability for violation of rules
5. recognition of inappropriate behavior open to problems or misunderstandings
6. reporting requirements
7. how to respond to an incident or an emergency, including topics such as:
  - what to do when you believe a child is the victim of inappropriate conduct by a church worker
  - what to do when you believe a child in your program is a victim of abuse by family members or others
  - what to do when you believe that two children in your program are involved in inappropriate sexual activities
  - what to do when two adult church workers are engaged in an inappropriate sexual relationship
8. your church's touching policy
9. appropriate discipline techniques
10. who to turn to for advice or help

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## **Response Procedures for Serious Incidents, Abuse or Accidents**

### **General Principles**

When responding to allegations of abuse, the church and its representatives will keep several key principles in mind:

1. Reports should be taken seriously; consistent with Tennessee state law is it the duty of the church and its representatives to report any alleged incidents.
2. Allegations should be handled with sensitivity for people's privacy and confidentiality.
3. The church should cooperate with law enforcement and social services.
4. The victim should not be blamed.
5. The church should seek to provide support as appropriate for alleged victims, alleged offenders, and their families during this period of great stress.
6. The insurance carrier should be contacted as soon as possible.

### **Reports of questionable behavior must be taken seriously.**

They should not be ignored or allowed to circulate without concern for the integrity and reputation of the accuser, the accused, and the church.

### **Allegations may occur in a variety of ways.**

Since the church cannot control how a report will surface, it is important that officers, employees, and volunteers follow the steps described below. These steps will ensure that the allegation is channeled to the appropriate person and that the problem is not compounded by an improper response.

### **Nonchurch related allegations must be taken seriously.**

Young people frequently choose to confide in church youth workers about abuse happening outside of the church. It is important that reports of this type are also handled sensitively and appropriately. The church's policies also apply to reported allegations not related to church activities or workers. These policies are appropriate for allegations involving church activities **and** nonchurch related reports of abuse.

### **When a Victim Reports Abuse**

The person hearing the initial report should follow these steps:

- **Listen supportively.**
- **Hear the victim out** — do not minimize or discount the allegation.
- **Do not judge** the allegation negatively or positively.
- **Ask basic questions** to clarify facts if needed, but do not try to investigate or verify the allegations of the report.
- **Note the pertinent details in writing** as soon as possible after hearing the report, but don't take notes when the victim is speaking. Give him or her your full attention.
- **Contact the program leader, youth pastor, or Head of Staff immediately.** The leader or pastor will help decide on the next step, consult with legal counsel, and make the report to law enforcement if necessary.

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- **If the Head of Staff is being accused**, the person receiving the initial report should contact the chair of the church's personnel committee or the Presbytery Committee on Ministry.
- **Do not discuss the allegation** with anyone except those who have a need to know and are helping to respond.

**If the safety of the child is at issue**, the worker must use his or her own judgment to decide the best way to proceed. Youth workers may contact law enforcement directly if timing is critical and church leaders are unavailable for consultation.

## **Church Workers Who Observe Questionable Activities or Suspicious Behavior**

Any person who observes violations of church guidelines or has reasonable suspicions of inappropriate activity is required to report these concerns to an appropriate leader.

- **Write brief notes** to document specifically what you have observed.
- **Contact the program leader, youth pastor, or Head of Staff as soon as possible.** In a private conversation, the program leader or pastor can help evaluate any suspicions. **The program leader or pastor is responsible for any further response to the situation.** He or she must document the report in the confidential files. Possible responses can range from reminding the worker about following guidelines to reporting the incident to law enforcement.

## **Procedures For Children/Youth Who Exhibit "At Risk" Behaviors**

At risk behaviors are defined as those actions, verbal or physical, which exceed the bounds of normal adolescence. These behaviors include but are not limited to:

- signs of mental or emotional instability
- verbal outbursts, including profanity
- physical exchanges with others including hitting, slapping, throwing objects
- verbal or physical displays that are sexually explicit or violent
- any behavior, verbal or physical, that would or could harm said individual and/or another individual. This also includes threats of any nature.
- blatant disregard for others, including authority figures
- blatant disregard for personal property of self, others, church or other property

Any child/youth who displays any of the above or a combination of will be subject to the following:

- The Director of Congregational Ministries and the Director of Youth or Director of Children, as appropriate, will notify the Head of Staff of the at risk behavior. The child/youth will be asked to stop the behavior and ordinarily the parents will be contacted.
- If damages, physical, mental or emotional occur, the child/youth will make amends and or reparation for damages. In some instances, the child/youth's ability to participate in church activities, programs, trips or outings will be limited or curtailed for a period of time as determined by the advocacy team and the parents.
- In some cases, the advocacy team, the Director of Congregational Ministries and/or the Head of Staff will recommend professional counseling services to the family.
- In accordance with our Christian faith, all issues of this nature will be handled with sensitivity, pastoral concern and confidentiality.

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### **Anonymous/Confidential Reporting:**

Adults, children and youth are encouraged to report suspected abuse, inappropriate behavior, etc of themselves or others whether church-related or otherwise to the Director of Congregational Ministries, the Director of Youth or Director of Children, as appropriate, and other GPC staff and volunteers. Anonymity of all those who report incidents is guaranteed.

### **First Aid and Emergency Response Guidelines**

1. A first aid kit shall be available in all classrooms and carried on every outing. Ice for ice packs shall be available in the church kitchen.
2. Each injury and accident involving a child/youth that requires first aid must be reported by the leader to the Director of Congregational Ministries and the Director of Youth or Director of Children, as appropriate, and to the child's/youth's parent as soon as practical.
3. If the circumstances warrant it, minor first aid will be administered immediately by a leader. Additional medical attention, including a call to "911" will be considered if necessary.
4. The leader involved in the incident will enter the incident in a log maintained in the church office, identifying the persons involved, the time and nature of the injury or accident, the person or persons who administered first aid, and the person who reported the matter.
5. The Director of Congregational Ministries or the Director of Youth or Director of Children, as appropriate will try to make a follow up telephone call to a parent of an injured child/youth within 24 hours after the injury.

### **Church Workers Responding to Serious Accidents**

- **Render appropriate first aid** and call for appropriate emergency help.
- **Provide emotional support** to the victim(s) and other young people who may be upset by the accident. (Prayer is usually appropriate!)
- **Contact the program leader, youth pastor, or Head of Staff as soon as possible** after ensuring the safety of victims. One of these leaders should then take charge of responding to the accident using the procedures listed below in this policy.
- **Write brief notes** about what happened while the event is still fresh in your memory.
- **Be cautious about making statements** that imply responsibility or provide information against the interests of the church and its workers.

### **Church Leaders Responding to Serious Incidents (Accidents or Abuse)**

In cases of **serious** incidents, the leadership of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** will form a small team consisting of appropriate church leaders and any legal counsel they may retain. The team should respond quickly to an accident or report of abuse using the following guidelines:

- The team should **evaluate the report** with the person(s) who heard the initial report.
- The team should **decide** if a report to authorities is warranted. Guidance of the church's attorney is often necessary because reporting statutes and relevant criminal statutes may be complicated. This is a decision based on the information at hand and applicable laws.
- The team should **not attempt to verify the allegations**.
- The team should **contact law enforcement or social services**.

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- The team should **cooperate with law enforcement** under the guidance of the church's attorney.
- With the consent of law enforcement, the team should **inform** the victim's parents, the accused worker, and the alleged victim that the child and youth worker are not to have further contact (including verbal contact). Also, the youth worker is to refrain from any youth work until the issue is resolved.
- The team should **inform the church's insurance carrier**.
- The team should **inform the Memphis Presbytery**.
- The team should designate one of its members as a **spokesperson**. All contact with the news media should be handled by the spokesperson. The team should inform all necessary persons not to respond to media inquiries except to refer questions to the spokesperson.
- The team should consider hiring a **public relations firm** or representative to help manage the publicity of a serious incident.
- The team should **document** its activities in writing. Briefly log what is learned and what and when actions are taken. Logs should be dated and initialed or signed each time an entry is made.

### **Tips for Dealing with the News Media**

In the event of a serious incident which attracts media interest, only the Head of Staff of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** is authorized to speak on behalf of the church. All other persons are requested to make no public comment while the incident is investigated.

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**Appendix A – Personnel Documents**

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### **Personnel File Checklist**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Has applicant been a church member for at least six months?      **Y**      **N**

R=Received, W=Waived, NR=Not Required.

#### **Items contained in this file:**

*Initials/Date*

_____ Signed Application Form	__ R	__ W	<b>mandatory</b>
_____ Signed Release and Authorization Form	__ R	__ W	<b>mandatory</b>
_____ Reference 1	__ R	__ W	<b>mandatory</b>
_____ Reference 2	__ R	__ W	<b>mandatory</b>
_____ Reference 3	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Interview Notes	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Background Check	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Child Abuse Registry Check (if available)	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Signed Auto Safety Form (if driving)	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Copy of Driver's License and Proof of Insurance (if driving)	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Signed Permission/Waiver Form	__ R	__ W	<b>mandatory</b>
_____ Special Waiver Forms (if needed)	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Signed Copy of Applicable Guidelines for Youth Workers	__ R	__ W	<b>mandatory</b>

#### **The applicant has:**

_____ Received a copy of the job description(s)	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Received a copy of the applicable Guidelines for Youth Workers	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Received a copy of the Rapid Response Guidebook	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Attended appropriate training	__ R	__ W	__ N R
_____ Current CPR and first aid certification	__ R	__ W	__ N R

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Germantown Presbyterian Church**

### **Children's and Youth Ministry Application**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** This form is to be completed by all applicants (volunteer and employee) for any position involving supervision or custody of minors. This application is used by **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** to help promote a safe environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs or use our facilities.

Any applicant who has ever been convicted of child sexual abuse, physical abuse, or domestic violence should not volunteer service in any church sponsored activity or program for children or youth. Applicants with criminal records of other types will be evaluated at the discretion of church leaders.

All applicants must study and agree to obey the guidelines that are provided for their program and position within the church's children's and youth ministry.

#### **Please answer each question.**

Consistent with relevant law, the information on this application will not be disclosed to unauthorized persons.

Circle **Y** for yes or **N** for no. You may use the back of the paper for explanations or you may attach extra pages.



## ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

misconduct involving children? If so, provide a description of the circumstances and name and address of the entity receiving the report.

**Y N** Have you ever been subjected to expulsion, reprimand, or other discipline by a church, denomination, or other organization? If so, please describe the circumstances and provide the name and address of the church, denomination or religious organization involved.

**Y N** Have you ever been disciplined or dismissed from employment or a volunteer position by any employer, including charitable and religious organizations, following an allegation of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or other immoral or inappropriate behavior or conduct? If so, please describe the circumstances and the name and address of the employer.

**Y N** Have you ever been the subject of a civil lawsuit involving sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or other immoral behavior or conduct, involving adults or children? If so, please describe the circumstances and provide the name and address of the employer, educational institutions, church, or other organization where the lawsuit, investigation, or allegation arose or occurred.

**Y N** Have you ever been the subject of a complaint or disciplinary proceeding against a professional license or other license held by you, including but not limited to a license to provide child care or similar services?

**Y N** Have you ever been the subject of any disciplinary action, transfer, or dismissal, or been named as a defendant in a civil or criminal lawsuit, as a result of an accident or mishap involving children? If so, please describe the circumstances and provide the name and address of the employer, church, or organization with which you and/or the children were associated at the time of the incident.

**Y N** Do you have any investigation, review, or disciplinary action pending by an employer, organization in which you volunteered, licensing authority, or professional association for sexual misconduct, violence, or misconduct involving children?

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Church Activity**

List other churches you have attended over the past five years.

<i>Church Name</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Contact</i>	<i>Years Attended</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Name of church of which you are (check one): \_\_\_\_\_

a member currently     most recently     I have never been a member of a church before.

If a member of this church, how long have you been attending **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**? \_\_\_\_\_

List previous work (church and non church) involving children or youth.  
Use a separate sheet of paper if needed.

<i>Work Place</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Contact</i>	<i>Type of Work</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

List gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that may have prepared you for work with children and youth. Use a separate sheet of paper if needed.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Employment History**

Identify all employers for whom you have worked in the past five (5) years. Include parttime and temporary employers. Start with your most recent employer. Attach an additional sheet if necessary.

<i>Employer Name &amp; Supervisor's Name</i>	<i>Area Code &amp; Phone Number</i>	<i>Title &amp; Duties</i>	<i>Dates Employed</i>	<i>Reason for Leaving</i>
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Please describe your activities during any gaps in employment in excess of three months. Do not include leave or time off due to illness or medical treatment.

## **References**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address &amp; Telephone</i>	<i>Years Known/Relationship</i>
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# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Applicant's Statement**

I hereby authorize all employers, organizations, churches, and other entities and persons identified in this form to release any information contained in their files or records concerning me.

In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**, I hereby release **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** and any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any Information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application. I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF, AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT.

I understand and agree that it is critical to the mission and ministry of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** that all employees and volunteers conform to the highest standards of safety, interpersonal conduct, and sexual morality. I affirm that I will strictly comply with **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** youth ministry policies and procedures, including those concerning child safety and protection, sexual abuse and misconduct, and interpersonal relationships. I understand and agree that failure by me to abide by such policies and procedures may result in my immediate dismissal, or disciplinary action, all in the discretion of the church.

My responses above are truthful and accurate. I understand and agree that if they are not truthful and accurate, **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** may determine that I am no longer qualified to be associated with its programs as a church worker, employee, or volunteer in any capacity.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*To be witnessed by a church staff member*

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Germantown Presbyterian Church**

### **Children's & Youth Worker Authorization for Background Check**

#### **Release Authorization**

In connection with my application for placement, I understand that an investigative report may be requested that will include information as to my character, work habits, performance, and experience, along with reasons for disciplinary action or termination of past employment. I understand that as directed by policy and consistent with the job described, you may be requesting information from public and private sources about my: criminal record, driving record, education, and previous employment.

The fact that applicants have a criminal record will not be an automatic bar to employment or work as a volunteer. Factors such as age at the time of the criminal offense, seriousness and nature of the violation, time elapsed, and subsequent rehabilitation will be taken into account. I acknowledge that a telephonic facsimile (fax), electronic, or photographic copy shall be as valid as the original.

I hereby authorize, without reservation, any law enforcement agency, court, institution, information service bureau, school, employer, or other organization or person contacted by Germantown Presbyterian Church or its agent, Kroll Background of American, Inc., to furnish the information described above.

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*Signature*

*Print your full name*

*Today's Date*

**The following information is required by law enforcement agencies and other entities for positive identification purposes when checking records. It is confidential and will not be used for any other purpose.**

---

*Print other last names you have used*

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*Home Address*

*City*

*State*

*Zip*

---

*Social Security Number*

*Date of Birth*

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*Driver's License Number*

*Name as it appears on license*

*State Issuing License*

***Germantown Presbyterian Church  
Safe Practices Policy***

**Germantown Presbyterian Church**

**Children's and Youth Worker Reference Form**

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Church or Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Contacting the Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Contact   \_\_\_ phone   \_\_\_ letter           \_\_\_ personal conversation

**Reference Questions**

How do you know the applicant? For how long have you known him or her?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would you recommend this applicant for a position of trust supervising youth and children? Why or why not?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*At this point ask any relevant and legal questions that are appropriate to the situation, such as specific duties, length of employment, strengths and weaknesses when dealing with young people, etc. Information may be noted on the back of this paper. Remind the reference that "information will not be disclosed to unauthorized persons."*

**Closing Question**

Is there anything else we should know about this person before putting him/her in a position of trust with youth and children?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Germantown Presbyterian Church**

### **Auto Safety Certification**

This form is intended for workers who have responsibility to conduct church business or transport youth by personal auto and/or church van or bus. Only persons with a valid driver's license and valid personal auto insurance may transport others as part of church activities.

Circle either **Y** for Yes or **N** for No. The information on this application will not be disclosed to unauthorized persons.

**Y N** Are you now a licensed driver? Please present your license to staff so they may copy it for the records.

**Y N** Do you currently have personal auto insurance? Please present your proof of insurance card to staff so they may copy it for the records.

**Y N** Have you been ticketed for driving violations (parking tickets not included) within the past 2 years? (If yes, please explain the nature of the tickets on the back of this paper.)

### **Agreement to Notify of Driving Events**

I agree to immediately inform the Director of Congregational Ministries or Head of Staff if my driver's license is suspended or revoked, if I am ticketed for a driving offense, or if I have DUI or DWI charges pending. I must also notify the Director of Congregational Ministries or the Head of Staff if my personal auto insurance is canceled or not renewed. These notifications are required even if the offenses are not related to church work. The church will not release this information to unauthorized persons.

### **Seat Belt Usage**

I agree to transport persons only in passenger seats equipped with appropriate seat belts and child safety seats. I agree to require seat belt usage and child safety seat usage at all times. In buses that are not outfitted with seat belts, this rule does not apply.

### **Safe Vehicles**

I agree to transport persons only in vehicles that are in safe operating condition.

**I have truthfully and accurately responded to the questions above. I agree to notify the church if any of the driving events listed above occurs.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to church staff:** This form, together with a copy of the applicant's driver's license and insurance card, should be filed with the applicant's application.

***Germantown Presbyterian Church  
Safe Practices Policy***

**Appendix B – Operating Documents**

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Germantown Presbyterian Church**

### **Guidelines for Nursery Workers**

*Note: Sexual misconduct and child abuse are realities in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a “good shepherd” by taking steps to protect the children in our care. GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH has implemented a policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone who has custody or supervision of nursery age children. We pray for God’s blessing for our children, workers, and church.*

#### **Before You Begin**

**SixMonth Rule** — All workers must be members or regular attendees of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** for at least six months before working in the nursery. This guideline may be waived for employees.

**Completion of Application** — All nursery workers must complete and sign an application form.

**Release Authorization Form** — All nursery workers must complete and sign a Release Authorization form.

**References** — After gaining the applicant’s permission, church leaders will contact references. Persons asked for references may be suggested by applicants or selected by church leaders. The church may contact employers, former ministers, and persons who have supervised applicants in church work previously.

**Interview** — All nursery workers must be interviewed by a nursery or church leader to determine their suitability for nursery work. Information from this interview will not be released to unauthorized persons.

**Background Check and Social Services Registry** — After gaining the applicant’s permission, church leaders will conduct a criminal background check and a registry check for applicants. This is mandatory for primary positions and strongly suggested for secondary positions.

**Auto Safety Form** — All nursery workers who will be driving children or conducting other church business must complete and sign an Auto Safety form.

**Signed Agreement to Follow Guidelines** — All nursery workers must sign the agreement at the end of these guidelines to show their commitment to observe these guidelines.

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Guidelines**

**Two Person Rule** — Two workers must be present in each nursery room at all times. This rule accomplishes two important objectives. First, it reduces the risk of child abuse. Secondly, it reduces the risk of unfounded claims of abuse. Teams of workers cannot be of the same family.

**Only assigned workers may be in the nursery.** There are two exceptions to this rule: nursing mothers and parents called to the nursery to calm an upset child.

**Only parents can receive their child from the nursery.** Nursery workers should release children only to their parents (not to older siblings).

**Corporal Punishment** (hitting or spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are never appropriate in **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. Nursery workers must consult a nursery leader or other church leader if they need help with discipline techniques.

**Workers must report suspected or observed child abuse** to the nursery leader or a pastor immediately. Violations of these guidelines or suspect behavior by other workers must be reported in the same manner.

**Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct.** This is needed in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

**Workers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved** from nursery duty at the sole discretion of the Child Care Coordinator and with approval of the Head of Staff and the personnel committee.

**I have read the guidelines above. I agree to observe them faithfully:**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Germantown Presbyterian Church**

### **Guidelines for Sunday School Teachers**

*Note: Sexual misconduct and child abuse are realities in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a “good shepherd” by taking steps to protect the children in our care. GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH has implemented policies to help safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone working in the Sunday school program. We pray for God’s blessing for our children, workers, and church.*

#### **Before You Begin**

**SixMonth Rule** — All workers must be members or regular attendees of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** for at least six months before teaching Sunday school.

**Completion of Application** — All Sunday school teachers must complete and sign an application form.

**Release Authorization Form** — All Sunday school teachers must complete and sign a Release Authorization form.

**References** — After gaining the applicant’s permission, church leaders will contact references. Persons asked for references may be suggested by applicants or selected by church leaders. The church may contact employers, former ministers, and persons who have supervised applicants in church work previously.

**Interview** — All Sunday school teachers must be interviewed by a church leader to determine their suitability for teaching. Information from this interview will not be released to unauthorized persons.

**Background Check and Social Services Registry** — After gaining the applicant’s permission, church leaders will conduct a criminal background check and a registry check for applicants. This is mandatory for primary positions and strongly suggested for secondary positions.

**Auto Safety Form** — All Sunday school teachers who will be driving children or conducting other church business must complete and sign an Auto Safety form.

**Signed Agreement to Follow Guidelines** — All Sunday school teachers must sign the agreement at the end of these guidelines to show their commitment to observe these guidelines.

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Guidelines**

**Two Person Rule** — Two workers must be present in each Sunday school room at all times. This rule accomplishes two important objectives. First, it reduces the risk of child abuse. Secondly, it reduces the risk of unfounded claims of abuse. Teams of workers cannot be of the same family.

**Corporal punishment** (hitting or spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are never appropriate in **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. Teachers must consult their supervisors or a pastor if they need help with misbehaving youth or discipline techniques.

**Teachers must report suspected or observed child abuse** to the staff liaison or a pastor immediately. Violations of these guidelines or suspect behavior by other workers must be reported in the same manner.

**Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct.** This is needed in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

**Workers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved** from Sunday school duty at the discretion of staff liaison and pastor.

**I have read the guidelines above. I agree to observe them faithfully:**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Germantown Presbyterian Church**

### **Guidelines for Youth Group Leaders and Youth Choir Leaders**

*Note: Sexual misconduct and child abuse are realities in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a “good shepherd” by taking steps to protect the children in our care. GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH has implemented a policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone working with youth in GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. We pray for God’s blessing for our children, workers, and church.*

#### **Before You Begin**

**SixMonth Rule** — All workers must be members of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** for at least six months before becoming youth workers (except compensated employees and interns who meet “frequent contact” screening standards).

**Completion of Application** — All youth program leaders must complete and sign an application form.

**Release Authorization Form** — All youth workers must complete and sign a Release Authorization form.

**References** — After gaining the applicant’s permission, church leaders will contact references. Persons asked for references may be suggested by applicants or selected by church leaders. The church may contact employers, former ministers, and persons who have supervised applicants in church work previously.

**Interview** — Youth leaders must be interviewed by a church representative to determine their suitability for youth group work. Information from this interview will not be released to unauthorized persons.

**Background Check and Social Services Registry** — After gaining the applicant’s permission, church leaders will conduct a criminal background check and a registry check for applicants. This is mandatory for primary positions and strongly suggested for secondary positions. (Registry checks may not be available in all states.)

**Auto Safety Form** — All youth workers who will be driving children or conducting other church business must complete and sign an Auto Safety form.

**Signed Agreement to Follow Guidelines** — All youth leaders must sign the agreement at the end of these guidelines to show their commitment to observe these guidelines.

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Guidelines**

**Team Leadership** — Whenever feasible a youth will not be in the primary care of only one adult. Teams of adults (preferably male and female) will supervise activities. This policy has three purposes: it provides for more than one adult to help ensure appropriate levels of supervision, it protects adults from unfounded allegations, and it lessens the possibility of an adult becoming a “guru” who thrives on the dependency of youth as well as an adult having undue influence over an individual youth.

**Overnight Activities** — At least two adults will supervise overnight activities. If the participants are male and female, then male and female chaperons must be present. If these conditions cannot be met, then the event should be postponed. It is never appropriate for an adult chaperon who is not a family member to share a bed with a youth. Males and females attending events must not share the same sleeping quarters and should have separate access to bathroom facilities. Experienced adult workers should be included with adults who are newcomers to youth ministry.

**Individual Counseling** — Team counseling is preferable whenever possible. When team counseling sessions are not feasible, notify another adult of the location and with whom you are meeting. Counseling should be done in a public place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others. Guard carefully to avoid seclusion. If possible, have female adults counsel female youths and males counsel males. A male/female team is generally appropriate for counseling either gender.

**LongTerm Counseling** — Youth workers should not meet with youth more than three times to discuss the same issue. Youth workers are not prepared or supported for longterm counseling or formal therapy. Adult leaders are encouraged to refer youth who they suspect have a serious need for counseling to professionals in the community. Questions about referral must be discussed promptly with the youth program leader or the minister. *(Insert specific instructions here about people to be contacted regarding serious needs.)*

**Informal Contact (Independent of Church Activities)** — Informal contact refers to phone calls, letters, or face toface contact between an adult worker and a youth that is not connected to official church activities. The church recognizes that informal contact between worker and youth frequently occurs. For example, workers may hire teens as baby sitters for their own children, or workers may see kids during social events with the child’s family. This interaction is usually legitimate and beneficial. However, workers should seek permission of parents before having informal contact with their child. The worker should clearly let the parent know the nature of the contact and that it is not part of church activity. Parents are responsible for monitoring this informal contact.

**Transportation To and From Meetings** — Transportation to and from meetings is not part of church or youth group activities. Parents are responsible for providing or arranging for this transportation. Parents are discouraged from asking leaders to transport children. However, if a leader does transport a child at the parent’s request, this should be recognized as informal contact (not a part of church activities), and the guidelines for informal contact should be followed (see paragraph above).

**Transportation as a Part of Church Programs** — The church may from time to time provide transportation as an official part of church activities. For example, the church may

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church***

## ***Safe Practices Policy***

provide transportation to outoftown events or field trips. When children are transported as a part of program activities, all guidelines will apply. Following the twoadult rule and having all drivers complete an auto safety certification form are especially important.

**Confidentiality — Youth workers must report to a clergy person if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime, or being abused.** There are limits to confidentiality when working with youth. Questions about such cases or other issues of confidentiality must be discussed promptly with the youth minister (or senior minister if the youth minister is unavailable). Any serious issues discussed in confidence should be reviewed with one of the ministers, who will also protect the confidential nature of the discussion. Conferring with a minister on sensitive issues is not considered breaking a confidence. It will be incumbent upon the minister to whom the report has been made to respond to the report in accordance with applicable law.

**Youth Supervising Youth —** Minors may help adults lead youth activities only under the direct leadership of adults. A minor may not be used to meet the team leadership or team counseling guidelines discussed above.

**Gifts —** Youth workers are generally discouraged from giving personal gifts or money to youth. When the giving of personal gifts is desired, the youth worker must first notify parents and the youth minister. Gifts can be easily misinterpreted. Gifts given to groups of young people are appropriate, such as graduation presents or awards for participation.

**Corporal Punishment —** Corporal punishment (hitting or spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are not appropriate in **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. Youth workers must consult their supervisors or a minister if they need help with misbehaving youth or discipline techniques.

**Open Door Policy —** All youth events should be open door. This means that workers, parents, and church members have a right to observe any youth activity.

**Dating or Sexual Involvement —** No adult youth worker is to date a youth or be romantically or sexually involved with a youth. Any adult with prior incidents of sexual misconduct may not be a youth worker or serve in any capacity of youth ministry at **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**. There are no exceptions to this guideline.

**Workers must report suspected or observed misconduct** by other workers to the youth program leader or pastor immediately.

**Supervision and Communication —** Youth workers must meet on a regular basis with the youth program leader, and the youth program leader must meet with the Head of Staff periodically to discuss any issues regarding these guidelines. Appropriate topics that must be discussed include problems, accountability, policy clarification, personal feelings, or other issues that may interfere with youth ministry efforts.

**Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct.** This is necessary in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

**Workers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved** from youth program duty at the discretion of the Director of Congregational Ministries and pastor.

***Germantown Presbyterian Church  
Safe Practices Policy***

**I have read the guidelines above. I agree to observe them faithfully:**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Germantown Presbyterian Church**

### **Guidelines for Program Leaders and Youth Trips**

*Note: We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a “good shepherd” by taking steps to protect the children in our care. GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH has implemented a policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone working with youth. We pray for God’s blessing for our children, workers, and church.*

#### **Before You Begin**

**SixMonth Rule** — All program leaders must be members of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** for at least six months before becoming program leaders.

**Completion of Application** — All program leaders must complete and sign an application form. **Release Authorization Form** — All program leaders must complete and sign a Release Authorization form.

**References** — After gaining the applicant’s permission, church leaders will contact references. Persons asked for references may be suggested by applicants or selected by church leaders. The church may contact employers, former ministers, and persons who have supervised applicants in church work previously.

**Interview** — All program leaders must be interviewed by a church representative to determine their suitability for this ministry. Information from this interview will not be released to unauthorized persons.

**Background Check and Social Services Registry** — After gaining the applicant’s permission, church leaders will conduct a criminal background check and a registry check for applicants: this is mandatory for primary positions and strongly suggested for secondary positions. (Registry checks may not be available in all states.)

**Auto Safety Form** — All program leaders who will be driving children or conducting other church business must complete and sign an Auto Safety form.

**Signed Agreement to Follow Guidelines** — All program leaders must sign the agreement at the end of these guidelines to show their commitment to observe these guidelines.

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

## **Guidelines**

**Team Leadership or TwoAdult Rule** — Program events must be supervised by at least two unrelated adults who have been approved for youth work. For field trips at least one youth worker should be the same gender as the children on the activity. If boys and girls are participating, then adults of both genders must be present. Experienced adult workers should be included with adults who are newcomers to this work.

**Overnight Activities** — It is never appropriate for an adult chaperon who is not a family member to share a bed with a youth. Males and females attending events must not share the same sleeping quarters and should have separate access to bathroom facilities. Adult workers should be included with adults who are newcomers to youth ministry.

**Individual Counseling** — Team counseling is preferable whenever possible. When team counseling sessions are not feasible, notify another adult of the location and with whom you are meeting. Counseling should be done in a public place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others. Guard carefully to avoid seclusion. If possible, have female adults counsel female youths and males counsel males. A male/female team is generally appropriate for counseling either gender.

**LongTerm Counseling** — Program leaders should not meet with youth more than three times to discuss the same issue. Program leaders are not prepared or supported for longterm counseling or formal therapy. Adult leaders are encouraged to refer youth who they suspect have a serious need for counseling to professionals in the community. This issue must be discussed with parents in most cases. Questions about referral must be discussed promptly with the program leader or pastor.

**Informal Contact (Independent of Church or Program Activities)** — Informal contact refers to phone calls, letters, or facetocontact between an adult worker and a youth that is not connected to official church activities. The church recognizes that informal contact between worker and youth frequently occurs. (For example, workers might hire teens as baby sitters for their own children, or workers may see kids during social events with the child's family.) This interaction is usually legitimate and beneficial. However, workers should seek permission of parents before having informal contact with their child. The worker should clearly let the parent know the nature of the contact and that it is not part of church activity. Parents are responsible for monitoring this informal contact.

**Transportation To and From Meetings** — Transportation to and from program meetings is not part of church or program activities. Parents are responsible for providing or arranging for this transportation. Parents are discouraged from asking program leaders to transport children. However, if a leader does transport a child at the parent's request, this should be recognized as informal contact and the guidelines for informal contact should be followed (see paragraph above).

**Transportation as a Part of Programs** — The church may from time to time provide transportation as an official part of program activities. For example, the church may provide transportation to outoftown events or field trips. When children are transported as a part of program activities, all guidelines will apply. Following the twoadult rule and having all drivers complete an auto safety certification form are especially important.

# ***Germantown Presbyterian Church Safe Practices Policy***

**Gifts** — Youth workers as a general rule are not to give personal gifts or money to youth. When the giving of personal gifts is desired, the youth worker should notify parents and the program leader. Gifts can be easily misinterpreted. Gifts given to groups of young people are appropriate, such as graduation presents or awards for participation.

**Open Door Policy** — All program events should be open door. This means that pastors, parents, and church members have a right to observe any youth activity.

**Confidentiality** — Program leaders must report to a program leader or pastor immediately if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime, or being abused. There are limits to confidentiality when working with youth. Questions about such cases or other issues of confidentiality must be discussed promptly with the youth pastor (or Head of Staff if the youth pastor is unavailable). Any serious issues discussed in confidence should be reviewed with one of the pastors, who will also protect the confidential nature of the discussion. Conferring with a leader or pastor on sensitive issues is not considered breaking a confidence. It will be incumbent upon the minister to whom the report has been made to respond to the report in accordance with applicable law.

**Youth Supervising Youth** — Minors may help adults lead youth activities only under the direct leadership of adults. A minor may not be used to meet the team leadership or team counseling guidelines discussed above.

**Corporal Punishment** — Corporal punishment (hitting or spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are never appropriate in **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. Youth workers must consult their supervisors or a pastor if they need help with misbehaving youth or discipline techniques.

**High Adventure Activities** — Special precautions must be taken on high adventure activities, such as rock climbing, hiking, overnight camps, raft trips, or the like. Both physical safety and safety from abuse are at-risk in high adventure situations. A high ratio of adults to youth is recommended. Guides for high adventure activities should be licensed by the sports governing body or government authorities to guide groups whenever possible.

**Program leaders must report suspected or observed misconduct** to their supervisor or Head of Staff immediately. Violations of these guidelines or suspect behavior must be reported in the same manner.

**Supervision and Communication** — Program leaders must meet on a regular basis with the youth program leader, and the youth program leader must meet with the Head of Staff periodically to discuss any issues regarding these guidelines. Appropriate topics that must be discussed include problems, accountability, policy clarification, personal feelings, or other issues that may interfere with youth ministry efforts.

**Program leaders must avoid even the appearance of misconduct.** This is necessary in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

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**Workers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved** from youth program duty at the discretion of Director of Congregational Ministries and pastor.

**I have read the guidelines above. I agree to observe them faithfully:**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Confirmation Letter for Insurance Carrier**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing today in regard to the liability insurance policy for **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** policy # \_\_\_\_\_. I would like to confirm the terms and conditions of this policy as part of my church's overall plan of child safety and risk management.

Please answer the following questions about our policy as specifically as possible:

1. Does this policy cover child abuse, neglect, and child sexual molestation by church employees and volunteers?
2. Does this policy cover sexual misconduct by church employees and volunteers?
3. Does this policy cover church volunteers as well as church employees?
4. Will this policy pay for legal fees if the church, its employees, or volunteers are sued?
5. Will this policy pay for damages resulting from emotional distress and physical injuries? If so, in what circumstances?
6. Are lawsuits related to employment practices covered by this policy?
7. Will this policy pay for libel, slander, and defamation claims?
8. Does this policy cover personal vehicles used by employees and volunteers in the course of church activity?
9. Does this policy cover church activities that occur away from church property? in other states? in foreign countries?
10. Does this policy cover errors and omissions by church employees?
11. Please provide us with a list of specific coverages and activities included in this policy.
12. Please provide us with a list of specific coverages and activities excluded by this policy.
13. Based upon your experience insuring other churches, can you give us a list of specific coverages that we lack and should add to our insurance coverage?
14. Please explain the specific actions our church must take if we need to report a claim.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

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## **Trip Planning Sheet**

### **Instructions**

Church policy requires children's and youth ministry workers to complete this form prior to events involving children that meet any of the following three standards:

1. trips that are estimated to be longer than 50 miles round trip,
2. overnight events (in town or out), or
3. taking young people to participate in activities that may pose special hazards, such as swimming, boating, camping/hiking, cycling, climbing/rope courses, skiing, airplane flights, or similar.

**Submitted by:** Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Approved by:** Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Who is going on this trip?**

\_\_\_ Sunday school \_\_\_ youth group other \_\_\_\_\_

Adult workers who will be going: Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Adult workers who will be driving: Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Destination:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **When will you leave?**

### **When do you expect to return?**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency phone number(s)** where you can be reached (if possible):

\_\_\_\_\_

If phone contact is not possible, what is the best way to contact you in an emergency? (*i.e., sheriff's department, park ranger, resort management, etc.*)

\_\_\_\_\_

**How are you traveling:**

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church vehicle    private auto   other \_\_\_\_\_

**Check any hazardous activities you expect to participate in during this trip.**

Please be prepared to discuss these hazards and precautions with the church leader approving this form.

swimming                       boating       camping/hiking       cycling

climbing/rope courses    skiing       airplane flights

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Checklist:**

permission waivers signed by parents/guardians (including emergency medical permission)

permission waivers available during trip

first aid kit

safety and maintenance checklist\_if church vehicle used

**Rapid Response Guidebook**

**Miscellaneous notes, additional plans, precautions regarding this trip:**

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## **Permission/Waiver Form**

Name of Child or Adult Participant (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s) of child participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Age of Child \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ Academic Grade \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Functions and Activities**

It is my understanding that participating in the programs and recreational and other activities of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** is a privilege. Prior to my participation in such activities, I acknowledge that there are certain risks associated with the activities, including, by way of example, physical injury due to activity-related accidents, physical injury due to transportation-related accidents, illness, or even death. In addition, I acknowledge that there may be other risks inherent in these activities of which I may not be presently aware.

## **Release of Liability**

By signing this Permission/Waiver Form, I expressly warrant that the child named above or I, if I am a participant, am capable of withstanding both the physical and mental demands of the activities discussed above. I also expressly assume all risks of the child or me participating in the activities, whether such risks are known or unknown to me at this time. I further release **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** and its ministers, leaders, employees, volunteers, and agents from any claim that my child may have or that I may have against them as a result of injury or illness incurred during the course of participation in the activities. This release of liability shall include (without limitation) any claims of negligence or breach of warranty. This release of liability is also intended to cover all claims that members of the child's or my family or estate, heirs, representatives, or assigns may have against **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** or its ministers, leaders, employees, volunteers, or agents.

I further agree to indemnify and hold harmless **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** and its ministers, leaders, employees, volunteers, or agents from any and all claims arising from my participation in its activities and programs, or as a result of injury or illness of my child during such activities.

## **First Aid and Emergency Medical Treatment**

I recognize that there may be occasions where the child named above or I, if I am a participant, may be in need of first aid or emergency medical treatment as a result of an accident, illness, or other health condition or injury. I do hereby give permission for agents of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** to seek and secure any needed medical attention or treatment for the child named above or me, if I am a participant, including hospitalization, if in the agent's opinion

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such need arises. In doing so I agree to pay all fees and costs arising from this action to obtain medical treatment.

I give permission for attending physician(s) and other medical personnel to administer any needed medical treatment, including surgery and, again, I agree to pay for the medical treatment.

## **Special Events and Field Trips**

I understand that the child named above or I will be participating

in \_\_\_\_\_

from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that during this period

my child/ward or I, if I am an adult participant, may take part in activities such as:

\_\_\_\_\_ and other activities consistent with the purposes of the church.

## **Publicity**

On occasion, **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** takes photographs or makes an audio or videotape recording of children and/or adults involved in church activities. Such photographs or video records may be used by staff and participants to remember the activities and participants. In addition, such photographs and audio/visual recordings may be used in **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** publications or advertising materials to let others know about our ministry. In addition, local news organizations may hear of our activities or events, and our church may invite or allow them to photograph or record our events for news reporting on special interest features. I consent to the use of any such audio or visual record of the child named above or me, if I am participating, to be used, distributed, or displayed as agents of the church see fit. This consent includes but is not limited to: photographs, videotape, and audio recordings. Furthermore, I give permission for the child to be interviewed by the news media, or for such photographs and other audio or visual records to be used by the news media.

## **Health Insurance Information**

Insurance Company \_\_\_\_\_ Policy Number \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Company Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Medical Doctor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

## **Emergency Contacts**

Names of persons and telephone numbers to call in case of emergency:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relation \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## **Swimming Ability**

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- Nonswimmer
- Beginner (capable of swimming for several minutes in deep water)
- Moderate (capable of swimming several lengths of pool)
- Advanced (capable of swimming long distances)

### **Medical History**

Special medical needs or concerns (allergies, conditions, dietary needs, medications, etc.):

### **Other Information**

Other information leaders should know about the child or adult participant:

### **For Use Only if the Participant is a Minor**

I represent that I am the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, who is under 18 years of age. I have read the above Permission/Waiver Form and am fully familiar with the contents thereof.

I give permission for the child named above to participate in the activities of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**, including any special events/activities described above. In consideration for allowing the participation of the child in the activities of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**, I hereby consent to the Permission/Waiver Form, including the Release of Liability above, on behalf of the child, and agree that this Permission/Waiver Form shall be binding upon me, my family, heirs, legal representatives, successors, and assigns.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name of Parent or Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Adult Volunteers and Employees**

As an adult volunteer or church employee, I hereby agree to each of the consents and waivers listed above, including the Release of Liability, as pertaining to my own participation in functions, activities, special events, and field trips.

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Young Person's Agreement**

I agree to participate in the functions and activities of **GERMANTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**, to cooperate with the leaders and other young people, and to conduct myself as a Christian. I promise to respect God, respect myself, respect other persons, and respect property. I understand that my continued participation in church activities depends on my support of this agreement.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Appendix C - A Glossary of Terms**

This is a glossary of terminology as used in this policy. Technical definitions used for clinical purposes may differ. Legal definitions will vary by jurisdiction.

*Abused or neglected child* - a child whose mental or physical health is endangered or threatened by the actions or failure to act by people responsible for the child's care.

*Advocacy/Implementation Team* - Head of Staff, Director of Congregational Ministries, Youth Program Director, Children's Program Director, Chair of Children's Ministry, Chair of Youth Ministry, Member of Personnel, and Member of Session. The purpose of this group, which will be convened at the discretion of the Director of Congregational Ministries and the Head of Staff, is address reports of incidents and acts of abuse as well as to determine courses of action in accordance with the Safe Practices Policy. This team may, in its discretion and from time to time, select from within or outside of the church membership other persons with expertise, including for example, a social worker, psychologist, counselor, attorney, insurance advisor or physician with expertise in the area of child abuse.

*Child molester* - a person who has sexually violated children.

*Child protective services* - a generic name for agencies of municipal or state government that investigate child maltreatment and provide services to victims and families. May also be called "social services, human services, child welfare," or similar names. Child protective services work closely with law enforcement and the courts. Most child protective services staff people have indepth social work and family counseling training.

*Child sexual abuse* - includes but is not limited to any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. Also referred to as molestation.

*Children and/or youth* - generally anyone less than 18 years of age. This category may also include persons over 18 years of age who are not able to fully protect themselves from exploitation or give consent for sexual activity (due to age, intellectual or physical impairments, or other incapacities). The definition of a "child" or "minor" may differ according to various state statutes and regulations. Consult your legal advisors as to how these terms may be defined and used in your state.

*Emotional abuse may take two forms:*

- failure to provide love, emotional support, and adult guidance (an act of omission) or,
- conduct that threatens a child's selfesteem and emotional development, such as humiliating, insulting, or belittling a child (an act of commission).

*Mandatory reporting* - Many states or other jurisdictions have laws that require certain types of caretakers (teachers, social workers, child care workers) to report suspected child maltreatment to child protective services or law enforcement. Since these rules vary greatly by jurisdiction and are frequently changed, *The Good Shepherd Program* strongly advises each user of this program to understand the mandatory reporting requirements that are applicable. If mandatory

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reporting is required, this information should be integrated into the guidelines and procedures of the user organization.

*Molestation* - see child sexual abuse.

*Neglect* - failure of a caretaker to provide for a child's basic needs or prevent harm to the child.

*Physical abuse* - nonaccidental injury to children caused by the acts of parents or others.

*Program or ministry leader* - persons who direct one component of the church's ministry to children. This category includes: youth pastor, nursery school director, Sunday school superintendent, and midweek program chairperson.

*Red flag* - an informal term for any indication that an individual may not be well suited to caretaker roles with children or youth. A red flag raises suspicions and causes program leaders to look more closely at an individual's qualifications or behavior. (Please see Model Policy #4 of the Good Shepherd Model Policy Manual.)

*Risk management* - a field of management in which an organization evaluates the risks it faces and minimizes or transfers risk in order to protect the effectiveness of the organization. Risk management usually includes the purchase of insurance as a part of the overall process.

*Sexual abuse/assault/exploitation* - any act of sexual intimacy lacking mutual consent and involving force or threat of force. This includes situations in which the victim is unable to give consent due to age, intellectual or physical impairments, or other incapacities. Note that this definition applies regardless of the ages of the victim and victimizer (i.e., adult/adult, adult/child, or child/child).

*Sexual misconduct* - *The Good Shepherd Program* defines this term as improper, exploitive sexual behavior between adults. Examples include a counselor who has sex with a person they are counseling or a minister having an extramarital affair with a church member. Note that some individuals and organizations use this term to refer to all inappropriate sexual activities, relationships, and behavior, whether involving children or adults.

*Worker or ministry worker* - any person who has custody or supervision of children under 18 years of age during church activities, whether in a paid or a volunteer role. This includes parents of kids who participate in activities.

*Workers by type:*

**Primary workers** - All paid staff and those volunteers in roles with greater responsibility or risk should be classified as primary workers and should meet the primary screening standards (please refer to Model Policy #3 of the Good Shepherd Model Policy Manual). Primary workers have greater responsibility and more opportunity to harm children, so churches must take extra care in their screening.

**Secondary workers** - Secondary workers are people who occasionally interact with minors and/or do so in less risky circumstances. For example, a volunteer who sees children only in a group setting, on church premises, and with a ministry leader present may be classified as a secondary worker. This category includes parents of participants who supervise activities.

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## **Policy History**

Spring 2003 – The Session of Germantown Presbyterian Church approved the purchase of the Good Shepherd Protection Policy template for implementation in our church. This approval was based on the research and recommendation of the chairs of the Youth Committee at that time.

Fall 2004 – The policy template was modified to fit Germantown Presbyterian Church programs and leadership.

The following reviews were conducted:

- Personnel Committee – no concerns
- Finance Committee – concerned about the cost of the program; potential expenditures include background checks and administrative costs, such as printing and mailing. The initial cost will be somewhat significant; ongoing costs will be minimal
- Legal – minor adjustments to language and procedure; compliance with Tennessee statute
- Insurance – no concerns

February 2004 – The policy, in its entirety, was presented to the Session for review and consideration.

March 2004 – The Session of Germantown Presbyterian Church approved the Child Protection Policy.

Fall 2004/Winter 2005 – The committee began a phased implementation of the policy

February 2005 – Amendments<sup>1</sup> presented to Session and approved

May 2005 – Amendments presented to Session

July 2005 – Amendments presented in May were approved

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<sup>1</sup> Details of all amendments are recorded in the meeting minutes of the Session of Germantown Presbyterian Church.