

## Kings Grant Presbyterian Church Safety Policy

### I. Statement of Purpose

Jesus said “Let the children come to me.” Matthew 19:14. The body of Christ that is Kings Grant Presbyterian Church is dedicated to teaching and nurturing our children in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe that the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of children is vital to their healthy development. To that end, we have created this Safety Policy designed to protect the children and youth of Kings Grant Presbyterian Church. The primary purpose of this Policy is to provide clear guidance and instructions to all the youth leaders and teachers concerning the operation of the ministries impacting our children. Our goal is to insure that any risk of harm to our children is as minimal as we can make it. While these guidelines must be tempered by the knowledge, judgment and discretion contained within this particular body of Christ, they are designed to be applicable to all persons who work with our children and youth.

### II. Standards for Youth Leaders

A. Adults who work with children and youth are ambassadors of Jesus Christ. As such, and mindful of the fact that their safety and well-being is our utmost priority, we therefore recognize the need to be worthy of the high standard of trust placed upon us. Hence, all adults desiring to work with children and youth (hereinafter “youth workers”) should be members or regular attendees of Kings Grant Presbyterian Church (“KGPC”) for a minimum of six months.

1. Exception: paid nursery workers hired by the Nurture Ministry need not be members or regular attendees of KGPC.

B. In order to provide as safe an environment as possible, all youth workers will be required to undergo a background check. Those adults for whom a background check is required include:

1. All paid staff;
2. Nursery workers;
3. PYF adult leaders;
4. PJ adult leaders;
5. Adults accompanying youth on overnight trips (e.g. mission, recreational, retreats)
6. LOGOS staff leaders;
7. Children and youth Sunday School teachers;
8. Youth music leaders.

C. Every background check will include the following steps:

1. Criminal record check utilizing Virginia State Police Form # SP-230 (Rev. 7-1-02, or its equivalent). Appendix A;
2. Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry (SOR), found at <http://www.sor.virginia.gov/> (<http://www.sor.virginia.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=118>).

D. Background checks will be initiated by the Pastor or Clerk of Session. The information disclosed in the background checks will be reviewed by the Pastor and Clerk of Session who have the authority to disqualify the individual from working with children and youth. If further guidance is desired a meeting of the Personnel Committee may be called. The disclosure of any offense delineated in the Code of Virginia Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry (listed in Appendix A) shall automatically disqualify that individual from working with children and youth.

E. Background checks of adults acting as youth workers at the time this Safety Policy is adopted shall be processed (*i.e.*, submitted to the Virginia State Police) within sixty days.

1. While the Church is waiting for background information, youth workers may continue working with children and youth.

F. Background checks of adults seeking to become youth workers following the adoption of the Safety Policy will be processed within thirty days of their request for participation.

1. While the Church is waiting for background information, youth workers may work with children and youth only under supervision.

G. The Pastor and Clerk of Session shall keep confidential all information received from the background checks. Such information will be stored with limited access afforded only to those with a need to know.

H. The cost of the background checks will be paid by KGPC.

1. Background checks should be renewed every five years.

J. All youth workers who anticipate providing automobile transportation to children and youth shall sign a Transportation Policy Acknowledgment and abide by its provisions.

### III. Activities Guidelines

A. Communication between youth workers, children and youth, and parents is vital in order to foster a bond of trust and confidence. Therefore, all plans for youth activities should be communicated to parents and their children well ahead of the scheduled activity. Additionally, the following guidelines should be observed:

1. Scheduled activities should be publicized by means of the Church's youth phone line (340-2840, ext. 6), newsletters, the Sunday bulletin, the "Good News," and/or e-mail.
2. All scheduled activities should be adhered to as advertised except in the event of an emergency.
3. For any overnight activity away from the premises of the Church, youth workers should provide to parents some means whereby participants in the activity may be reached in the event of an emergency.

B. Insuring adequate supervision of children and youth will promote a safer environment for all youth activities. Because the appropriate adult/child ratio may vary depending on the activity, Youth Ministry, Christian Education Ministry or Music Ministry should determine the necessary adult/child ratio for each activity falling under their umbrella. The following principles should be adhered to:

1. Except in rare circumstances approved ahead of time by the relevant Ministry, all activities should have more than one youth worker.
2. All overnight activities shall require more than one youth worker.
3. In determining the appropriate adult/child ratio, the relevant Ministry should also consider the appropriate male/female ratio.

C. Activities covered by these guidelines include the following:

1. Sunday school;
2. PYF;
3. PJ's;
4. LOGOS;
5. Vacation Bible School;
6. Nurseries whenever in use for church activities;
7. Music program;
8. Mission trips;
9. Other activities as they may arise within Youth Ministry, Christian Education Ministry or Music Ministry.

D. The Confirmation Class program is specifically exempted from the guideline that an activity should utilize more than one youth worker. The special nature of this one-on-one mentoring program provides a unique opportunity for the spiritual growth of the youth participants. Nonetheless, parental approval will be required for all youth desirous of participating in this program.

E. Children and youth, their parents and youth workers should covenant with each other concerning expectations for proper behavior during overnight activities. This covenant should be in writing, should be signed by the youth, their parents and the youth workers, and should specifically set forth such expectations. Appendix B.

F. Youth workers shall not touch, interact with, or otherwise communicate with children and youth in any way that is intended to be sexually stimulating. Common expressions of affection (hugs), affirmation (pats on the back), support (prayers), or physical care taking (*e.g.*, changing diapers, toileting) are appropriate in this community of caring Christians. Care must be taken, however, that expressions of affection and affirmation are not excessive or imposed upon a child or youth.

G. Parents and their children place a sacred trust in the youth workers of KGPC. In acknowledgment of that trust, youth workers must avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behavior directly with the youth or among themselves.

H. Youth workers are not prepared or supported to provide long-term counseling or formal therapy to children and youth. Youth workers should refer youth who they suspect have a serious need for counseling to the Pastor.

#### IV. The Church's Response

A. Youth workers shall diligently follow and enforce these policies. Youth workers who reasonably suspect any unhealthy or abusive activities shall discuss their suspicions promptly with the Pastor, Clerk of Session, or relevant Ministry Moderator. This includes inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other youth workers.

B. Minor incidents, *i.e.*, those not involving allegations of abuse or neglect, should be discussed with the Pastor or relevant Ministry Moderator for appropriate handling by them.

C. In the event an alleged incident of abuse or neglect is reported, the person receiving the report should follow the following procedures:

1. Be supportive and do not attempt to minimize or discount the allegations, or be judgmental.
2. Ask basic questions to clarify all facts but do not try to verify or independently investigate the incident.
3. After receiving the verbal report, the pertinent details should be reduced to writing.
4. The person receiving the report should contact the Pastor, Clerk of Session, or relevant Ministry Moderator and provide the information obtained, and not discuss the allegations with anyone else except those needing to know in order to help respond.
5. In the event that the Pastor or the Clerk of Session or the Ministry Moderator is the subject of the accusation, the report shall be made to the non-accused party.

D. In the event such an incident is believed to involve unlawful conduct, the Pastor, Clerk of Session and Ministry Moderator shall follow the guidelines delineated in the Response Procedure for Serious Incidents outlined in Appendix C.

E. All youth workers shall sign and receive a copy of this Safety Policy acknowledging its provisions and agreeing to abide by its terms.

Acknowledgment

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby acknowledge receiving a copy of the  
(Print name)

~~Kings Grant Presbyterian Church Safety Policy and, having read the same, agree to follow and abide by its provisions.~~

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)