**Terrace View Presbyterian Church**

**Sexual Misconduct & Child Protection Policy**

**Introduction**

We believe that Scripture and our faith in Jesus Christ call us to standards of responsible conduct in all of life, including sexual behavior. Human sexuality is an integral part of who we are as persons. However, it can become the basis for oppression where trust relationships are breached and persons are abused.

The purposes of this policy are to:

1. To set forth the procedures that shall be followed by Terrace View Church when an allegation/accusation of sexual misconduct or child abuse has been made.
2. To seek justice for an accused and an accuser by diligently pursuing the Church’s administrative, investigative, and judicial process to determine the truth or lack of truth in the allegation/accusation, thereby protecting the innocent and dealing appropriately with those who victimize others.
3. To promote proper healing of all persons where sexual misconduct or child abuse has occurred.

**Definitions**

a.) For the purposes of this policy, "child" and "children" means those of less than 18 years of age.

b.) Sexual misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this covenant to include: sexual abuse or exploitation of children or adults, rape or sexual assault, sexual harassment, verbal, emotional and/or spiritual abuse. Sexual misconduct is an abuse of authority and power, breaching Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relationship to gain advantage over another for personal gratification. Such behavior is not limited to physical contact, but may also include gestures, spoken words, or written contact.

c.) Types of abuse that involve touching include: fondling; oral, genital, and anal penetration; intercourse; rape.

d.) Types of abuse that do not involve touching include: verbal comments, pornographic videos, obscene phone calls, allowing children to witness sexual activity.

e.) Sexual abuse or misconduct includes unwelcome touching or non-touching interaction for the purposes of sexual stimulation among adults, whether this involves staff members, lay leaders, and/or members of the congregation. Sexual abuse or misconduct also includes any act that involves the sexual molestation, exploitation of a child by any party or other person who has permanent or temporary care. It is recognized that, under some circumstances, there may be a wholesome and consenting relationship among staff members or between a member of the staff and another adult.

f.) Child sexual abuse or misconduct includes touching or non-touching interaction for the purpose of sexual stimulation between a child and an adult. This behavior is always considered forced when the interaction involves a child and an adult, whether or not the victim has consented. This is also true in the case of any non-minor who is incapable of appraising the nature of the conduct or communicating unwillingness to be subject to unwelcome sexual interaction.

**Standards of Conduct**

a.) Volunteer adults working with children and youth in church related activities in a leadership position shall have attended Terrace View Presbyterian Church for at least three months and be well known to the supervisor. Exceptions can be made if the volunteer is someone previously known by the supervisor.

b.) Paid and volunteer adults and youth helpers shall not touch or interact with children in any way that is intended or could be reasonably construed to be sexually stimulating. Care must also be taken that consenting adults do not act in a sexual way during any Church activity. Common expressions of affection (hugs), affirmation (pat on the back), support (prayer), or physical care- taking (diapers, etc.) are appropriate as long as respect for others personal wishes about being touched are honored, not excessive, or imposed upon another individual.

c.) Supervisors of programs involving children should work in pairs; whenever possible, two adults should be present with the children at all activities. An unaccompanied adult should not drive a single child in a Church-sponsored activity without the permission of the child's parent or guardian. When practicable, parental permission should be obtained in writing. It is recommended that children and youth be transported in groups rather than alone. Age appropriate child restraints must be used when transporting children. Those transporting children for church sponsored events must also submit proof of appropriate automobile insurance.

d.) Christian education teachers, nursery advisors, and youth advisors should work in pairs when possible; a teacher may work alone when there is visual access to the classroom (door with window, or open door).

e.) All overnight activities must have a minimum of two adults present; for mixed youth overnights there must be both a male and female present. Parental permission in writing is required for all overnights. On those occasions when one-on-one counseling is appropriate, the adult should notify another adult where he/she and the youth will be.

f.) Christian education teachers, youth advisors, nursery supervisors and helpers shall discipline with kindness with the goal of helping children develop a sense of responsibility and self-control. Corporal punishment of any kind within the church is unacceptable. Corporal punishment includes but is not limited to slapping, spanking, pinching and/or shaking. Punitive techniques that cause physical pain such as assuming an uncomfortable position are not appropriate. Physical restraint of children should be used only when someone's safety is at risk. Derogatory remarks or comments that humiliate or frighten the child shall not be used. Appropriate discipline establishes clear expectations, provides rewards and incentives for acceptable behavior. Appropriate discipline uses verbal disapproval, loss of privileges, and redirection to teach children acceptable behavior.

**Supervision and Accountability**

a.) Christian education leaders will seek volunteers in sufficient numbers to allow staffing of the programs as stated above. Church staff may participate in these programs and may be present at random time to help with supervision.

b.) Communication and explanation of this policy will be included annually in all training and orientation programs for Christian education volunteers, as well as during officer training events.

c.) Written information about this policy shall be sent to all church members and posted in the office. Mention of this policy will be included in new member orientation classes.

d.) As a condition of paid or volunteer employment with children all people agreeing to work with children and/or youth will be required to state whether he/she has ever been convicted of a crime involving sexual abuse or misconduct, as defined in this covenant, or terminated from employment for sexual abuse, harassment, or misconduct. Two references will be required for all paid employees, and for volunteers in a leadership position who' have been known to the church or supervisors for less than six months. References will be asked whether the person has ever been convicted of a crime involving sexual abuse or misconduct. A background into his/her arrest records may be required.

**Reporting of Misconduct**

The first person to learn of an incident of sexual abuse or misconduct (either a person witnessing the incident or the victim) should immediately report this verbally to the staff person supervising the activity or any member of the misconduct response team. The misconduct response team consists of the current ruling elders and the deacons. The team, after obtaining such professional advice as is deemed necessary, shall appoint an investigation team of three members consisting of elder and deacon representatives. The team will conduct an investigation of the reported incident or charge. Should the report or charge prove to be credible, the team shall advise the Session and take such other acts as are necessary to investigate and resolve the matter. If a session member or deacon is the subject of such incident, that elder or deacon will be excluded from any part of the process.

Those persons involved in the report or investigation should hold information received in strict confidence, subject to such disclosures as are required under Church procedures or as required by law. Further action will be taken in accordance with the Book of Order policies, and legal requirements of the State of Washington.