

#### Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

"And Jesus took a child and put him in the midst of them; and taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'." adapted from Mark 9:36-37

#### I. Purpose and Mission

Called by Jesus Christ to welcome children and to care for the least among us, Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC) is committed to being a sanctuary in which children, youth, and vulnerable adults are nurtured and instructed in the faith and protected from abuse or neglect. We believe that it is our responsibility to provide a safe environment for children, youth, vulnerable adults, and those who work with them.

For the purpose of this policy, the terms "child," "children," or "youth" include all persons under the age of eighteen years. "Vulnerable Adult" is defined as any person who requires assistance for disabilities that may be physical, mental, or developmental.

For the protection of persons in our care, everyone working directly with children, youth, or vulnerable adults whether paid or volunteer through the ministries of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Greenwood, SC (WPC) is subject to the provisions of this policy.

Third-party entities providing services to children, youth or vulnerable adults within WPC facilities and/or on WPC property will be required to have its own like policy and to provide a copy of its policy to the WPC pastor for review and acceptance.

#### II. Application and Screening Process for Volunteers and Employees

#### A. <u>Adult V</u>olunteers

Those wishing to volunteer with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must:

- 1. Be members or active participants of WPC for a minimum of three months;
- 2. Complete the Volunteer Application (Appendix A)
- 3. Provide three references confirming work experience or volunteer service.
- 3. Have completed a satisfactory background check to be renewed every two years. The background check will include: State and National Criminal Background, Driving Record (if serving as a driver for an activity), Sexual Offender Registry Check.

#### B. <u>Youth Volunteer</u>

Youth volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults must:

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- 1. Be at least 13 years old to work with preschool and elementary age children. Be at least 16 years old to work with infants or toddlers.
- 2. Be a member or active participant of WPC for a minimum of three months;
- 3. Be at least four years older than the minors with whom they are interacting;
- 4. Be under the supervision of someone who is at least four years older than they are, but not less than 18.
- 5. Complete the Youth Volunteer Application (Appendix B)
- 6. Provide three references from teachers, coaches, mentors, or employers.

#### C. <u>Employees</u>

Candidates for employment will:

- 1. Complete the Employment Application (Appendix C)
- 2. Provide three professional references.
- 3. Complete a satisfactory background check to be renewed every two years. The background check will include: State and National Criminal Background, Driving Record (if serving as a driver for an activity), Sexual Offender Registry Check.

#### D. Screening Process

The Pastor/Head of Staff will ensure that the volunteer/employee application is reviewed, references are checked, and the background check is satisfactory before the volunteer/employee begins his/her duties.

The results of any individual's reference check and background check are to be kept strictly confidential. If information of a cautionary nature is revealed through a reference or background check, the person conducting the check shall note this information in writing. This information shall be considered by the Pastor, and either the chair of the Personnel Subcommittee (employees), or the Nurture and Education Committee (volunteers). This group shall decide on a course of action. The decision must be documented in writing, dated, and placed in the person's file. In such a case, the person's volunteer application may be:

- 1. Accepted unconditionally;
- 2. Accepted with clearly defined restrictions; or
- 3. Denied.

The Pastor and/or designee shall inform the volunteer/employee of the decision and its implications.

Westminster Presbyterian Church reserves the right to review applications from volunteers and/or employees at any time. Background checks or new reference checks may be requested either randomly or because of some concern. Background checks are required to be renewed every two years.

#### III. Participant Records

Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adults participating in WPC ministries, shall have on file a participant form (Appendix D1 or D2) which includes:

- 1. Contact information for parents, legal guardians, and caregivers.
- 2. Information on any custody situations, medical needs, allergies.
- 3. Signed release for medical care, to indemnify and hold harmless, and permission given or withheld for the child to be photographed and images used in church publications.

IV.	Standards of Benavior	
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We commit ourselves to the following guidelines and standards of behavior

- A. Two unrelated adults (18 and over) will supervise activities with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- B. Appropriate ratios will be maintained to insure adequate supervision.

Age	Staff-to-Child Ratios
Birth to one year	1:5
One to two years	1:6
Two to three years	1:8
Three to four years	1:12
Four to five years	1:17
Five to six years	1:20
Six to twelve years	1:23

SC Licensing Child/Staff Ratios or better will be maintained. If classes are mixed ages, the ratio of the lowest age child will be maintained.

- C. We will practice appropriate physical touch which includes: side hugs, handshakes, high fives, fist bumps, and holding hands. We will not allow inappropriate touch.
- D. Supervising adults will survey physical space for any potential hazards and mitigate them as necessary.
- E. Supervising adults will be at least four years older than the minors they are supervising, but not less than 18.
- F. Same-sex adult supervision will be provided for all overnight trips.
- G. In the case of an unforeseen circumstance or emergency in a classroom, when one adult is left with a group of minors, the door to the classroom is to be open and the remaining adult is to alert neighboring teachers or a supervising adult so checks may be kept on the group in case of need.
- H. Acts of sexual/physical abuse as defined by South Carolina Law 63-7-20 (Appendix E) are strictly prohibited and must be reported according to the reporting procedures of this policy and state law.
- I. Use of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs while leading, supervising, or participating in a ministry program of WPC involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults is prohibited.
- J. Adults will conduct appropriate communication with children, youth, and vulnerable adults including all electronic and social media.
- K. Supervision as directed in this policy is provided before, during, and after events until persons are released to parents, guardians, or caregivers.
- L. Any allegations of suspected abuse will be handled according to the provisions of this policy.

#### IV. Education/Awareness Programs or Trainings

- A. Annual training on, the prevention, detection, and reporting of abuse, and the WPC's Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy is required for:
  - 1. Employees
  - 2. Volunteers who work with children under 18
  - 3. Church Officers
- B. Training will be completed by the Pastor/Head of Staff and the Chair of the Nurture and Education Committee.
- C. An Informational Brochure (Appendix F) about the Protection Policy shall be available in the church office, the narthex, on the information table in the hallway outside the church office, and included in each new member packet.
- D. The Nurture and Education Committee will communicate at the beginning of the fall program year with the entire congregation regarding the Child Protection Policy.

#### V. Reporting Procedures

When a member, volunteer, parent, or employee of the Church suspects abuse or neglect, receives an allegation of abuse or neglect, or observes a violation of the policy to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults, the procedures outlined here should be followed. South Carolina law requires the prompt reporting of suspected abuse. The Pastor, and those who are employed or volunteer to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults are mandatory reporters of suspected abuse or neglect.

#### A. In the case of suspected abuse against a child, youth, or vulnerable adult

When an employee or volunteer has reason to believe that a child, youth, or vulnerable adult is the victim of abuse or neglect:

- 1. Do not leave the child, youth, or vulnerable adult alone. Listen and provide comfort.
- 2. Immediately report this information to the Pastor.
- 3. The Pastor will immediately provide all necessary information to the appropriate authorities:
  - Call 911 if situation is life threatening
  - SC Department of Social Services
    Toll Free Number: 1-888-CARE4US (1-888-227-3487)
    https://benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov/#/ran/home
- 4. Maintain confidentiality of the accused, accuser, and victim.
- 5. Do not confront the accused violator.
- 6. Under no circumstances should an employee or volunteer of the church attempt to personally investigate or resolve any allegations through any method including interviews of the child or other potential witnesses.
- 7. A person with firsthand knowledge of the event shall complete the Incident Report (Appendix G)
- 8. The Pastor, or designee, shall also immediately contact the child's parent or guardian and inform them of the allegation and the steps taken. If the report alleges abuse or neglect by the parent or guardian the Pastor may elect to have the appropriate authorities contact the parent or guardian.
- 9. Within 24 hours of a report of abuse to authorities, the Pastor shall inform the members of Session of the allegation and report without reference to the names of those involved.
- 10. The Pastor, or his/her designee, shall at all times serve as the spokesperson for the Church unless otherwise determined by Session.

#### B. In the case of an allegation of abuse against a volunteer, youth volunteer, or employee:

If an allegation of abuse is received against a church employee or church volunteer, the Pastor or immediate supervisor must report the allegation to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

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#### 1. Allegation against a Church Staff member:

If the allegation of abuse is against an employee of the church, the Pastor, the immediate supervisor, and the Business Affairs Committee (BAC) designee shall review the facts known to them and determine in their discretion whether it is in the best interest of the church for employment to be:

- a. Suspended during the course of the investigation (with or without pay as determined by the BAC);
- b. Terminated; or
- c. Retained with job functions that do not involve contact with minors.

If the investigation is concluded with no charges or findings filed against the employee, the Pastor, immediate supervisor, and the BAC's designee should review the information revealed during the course of investigation. Based on this information, this group will determine whether it is in the best interests of the church for employment to be terminated or retained. Outcome of the investigation shall be noted in the employee's personnel file.

#### 2. Allegation against a Church Volunteer:

If the allegation of abuse is against a volunteer, that volunteer shall be relieved of responsibilities involving minors served by the church for the duration of the investigation. The status of the volunteer may be revisited upon conclusion of the investigation at the discretion of the Pastor and Session or its designee. They may reinstate the volunteer if they believe it to be in the best interests of the church. However, if the investigation results in either charges being filed against the volunteer or a finding of abuse or neglect filed against the volunteer, the volunteer must not be reinstated. The outcome of the investigation shall be noted in writing in the volunteer's confidential file.

#### 3. Allegation against a Pastor:

If the allegation of abuse is against the Pastor, the Clerk of Session shall immediately contact the General Presbyter of Trinity Presbytery, the Chair of the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry and the appropriate law enforcement. The Clerk shall ask the Committee on Ministry to assign a pastor from the Presbytery to moderate a called Session meeting to apprise the Session of the steps and provisions in the Book of Order and the Presbytery's own Abuse Prevention Policy which governs such a situation.

In this case, the Clerk of Session or Presbytery appointed moderator are the only persons who may speak for the church in case of public requests for information, statements, interviews, etc.

#### VI. Church Response and Ministry

#### A. Victim Protections

- 1. Upon receiving information of abuse or neglect, involving an employee or volunteer of the church, the person who reports the allegation should immediately take steps to ensure the child, youth, or vulnerable adult is not placed in the presence or proximity of the named church employee or volunteer. For the duration of the investigation the Pastor, or his/her designee, shall continue to ensure the subject child, youth, or vulnerable adult is not placed in a situation where the employee or volunteer is present.
- 2. Any volunteer or employee of the church who becomes aware of an allegation of abuse or neglect will maintain confidentiality and will not share any information regarding the allegation except to the Pastor, immediate supervisor (if appropriate), and the appropriate

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investigating authorities. The Pastor, or designee, is the only person who may speak for the church in the case of public requests for information, statements, interviews, etc.

#### B. <u>Session Response</u>

Once the local authorities have determined that there are sufficient grounds for an investigation of the alleged abuse, the Pastors and Session shall have a called Session meeting for the purpose of outlining a congregational response plan, with guidance from an attorney. This plan shall include, but not be limited to:

- 1. The language and information to be included in a public response.
- 2. An explanation of what the congregation can expect during an investigation by local authorities.
- 3. A call to compassion and a call to refrain from extraneous discussion and gossip as unbecoming the body of Christ (John 8:7 and 1 John 1:8).
- 4. A reminder to the congregation that the Pastor is, by Session policy, the only person who may officially speak for the congregation.
- 5. A plan for continued pastoral support by both pastor and congregation for both the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator (assuming that both are parts of our family of faith).
- 6. Determine that the insurance carrier has been contacted.

#### C. <u>Pastoral Response</u>

In the case of any allegation or suspicion of abuse or neglect, it is the desire of the Session and Pastor that all involved parties will be given equal and appropriate pastoral care and support. As painful as such an allegation or suspicion may be, we recognize that the realities of the situation may not be easily discerned. Therefore, we intend to treat both the alleged perpetrator and the alleged victim as Children of God needing support and prayer, and to leave the discernment of the facts to those in the law enforcement community who are better trained to investigate such a painful situation. Paul wrote in Romans, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (3:23). Our goal is to express the love and concern of God for all involved in any allegation of abuse or neglect. In order to achieve that goal, the following guidelines have been adopted by Westminster Presbyterian Church:

- 1. When an allegation has been received, the Pastor and Session shall meet and decide how best to proceed in providing pastoral care for the alleged victim, alleged perpetrator and the congregation at large.
- 2. Appropriate Elders shall be invited to coordinate pastoral care for each individual and family.
- 3. If both parties are members of our congregation, the Pastor shall counsel the individual/families on the importance of maintaining distance and separation during the course of the investigation. The Pastor shall try to ensure that worship, education and fellowship opportunities for both parties are made available.

#### VII. Maintenance of the Policy

The Nurture and Education Committee will assign one of its members to be responsible to assist the Business Manager or other appointed staff person in implementing this policy. The Education Ministry will review this policy on an annual basis to propose changes or amendments that allow the policy to function most efficiently. An annual report will be reported to the Session including, but not limited to, background checks completed, reference checks completed, applications on file, and approved applications on file. All employees and volunteers will be required to update their application every two years.

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APPENDIX A Volunteer Application

APPENDIX B Youth Volunteer Application

APPENDIX C Employment Application
APPENDIX D1 Child/Youth Participation Form
APPENDIX D2 Adult Participation Form

**APPENDIX E South Carolina Law 63-7-20** 

**APPENDIX F Protection Policy Brochure** 

**APPENDIX G Incident Report** 

#### APPENDIX A: VOLUNTEER APPLICATION



#### **Volunteer Application Form**

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them."

#### Mark 10:14-16

Position Applying For	
Name	Date
Address	
Daytime phone	Evening phone
E-Mail Address	
Current Employer	
Current job responsibilities	
Previous work experience	
Previous volunteer experience	
How did you learn of this position?	
Special interest, hobbies and skills	

#### APPENDIX A: VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

What particularly attracted you to this position?		
What qualities, skills, or talents do you have that would help you in your work?		
What degrees, certificates, or training, if any, have you received related to this position?		

#### APPENDIX A: VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

References. Please list three personal references (people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide a complete address and phone information for each.

1.	Name	
	Address	
	Daytime phone	Evening phone
	Relationship to applicant	
2.	Name	
	Address	
	Daytime phone	Evening phone
	Relationship to applicant	
3.	Name	
	Address	
	Daytime phone	Evening phone
	Relationship to applicant	



#### **Youth Volunteer Application Form**

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them."

#### Mark 10:14-16

Name	Date
Volunteer Role	
Address	
Daytime phone	_ Evening phone
E-Mail Address	
School	
Current job responsibilities	
Previous work experience	
Previous volunteer experience	
How have you been engaged in the life of \	Westminster Presbyterian Church?

#### APPENDIX B: YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Special interest, hobbies and skills		
Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children, youth, or adults?		
What qualities, skills, or talents do you have that would help you in your work with children, youth or adults?		
What training, if any, have you received in the care and nurture of children, youth, or adults?		

#### APPENDIX B: YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

References. Please list three personal references (people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide a complete address and phone information for each.

1.	Name	
	Address	
	Daytime phone	Evening phone
	Relationship to applicant	
2.	Name	
	Address	
	Daytime phone	Evening phone
	Relationship to applicant	
3.	Name	
	Address	
	Daytime phone	Evening phone
	Relationship to applicant	

#### APPENDIX C: EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION



#### **Employment Application**

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them."

#### Mark 10:14-16

Position Applying For	
Name	Date
Address	
	Evening phone
E-Mail Address	
Current job responsibilities	
Previous work experience	
Previous volunteer experience	
How did you learn of this position?	
Special interest, hobbies and skills	

#### APPENDIX C: EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

What particularly attracted you to this position?	
What qualities, skills, or talents do you have that would help you in your work?	
What degrees, certificates, or training, if any, have you received related to this position?	

#### APPENDIX C: EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

References. Please list three personal references (people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide a complete address and phone information for each.

1.	Name	
	Address	
	Daytime phone	Evening phone
	Relationship to applicant	
2.	Name	
	Address	
	Daytime phone	Evening phone
	Relationship to applicant	
3.	Name	
	Address	
	Daytime phone	Evening phone
	Relationship to applicant	



#### **Child and Youth Participation Form**

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them."

Mark 10:14-16

Today's Date:	<del></del>
Please Check One:	
member regular atte	ndee first time visitor out of town visitor
Family Information	
Parent/Guardian 1:	
Name:	
Cell Phone:	Primary Email:
Street Address:	
City, State, Zip Code:	
Parent/Guardian 2:	
Name:	
Cell Phone:	Primary Email:
Street Address:	
in children and youth min indemnify and hold harml	all things necessary with regard to enrolling my child/children istry programs at Westminster Presbyterian Church. I hereby ess Westminster Presbyterian Church from any and all issues g my child/children in the program.
Signature	

#### APPENDIX D1: CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION FORM

First Chil	d's Name:	
Gender:	Date of Birth:	
School N	ame and Current Grade:	
Medical	Conditions, Allergies, Special Needs, Custody Information?	
Second (	hild's Name:	
Gender:	Date of Birth:	
School N	ame and Current Grade:	
Medical	Conditions, Allergies, Special Needs, Custody Information?	
Third Chi	ld's Name:	
	Date of Birth:	
	ame and Current Grade:	
	Conditions, Allergies, Special Needs, Custody Information?	
- Tvicaicai		
Photogra	ph Permission: I give permission for my child(ren) to be photographed w	vhile
•	ting in programs of Westminster Presbyterian Church. I understand that	•
-	sed for promotional purposes in church publications, including the churcl Yes Please call me to discuss	ו איכטאוני.
Signature		
- DIGITAL OF		



"My house shall be a house of prayer for all people"

Isaiah 56:7

#### **Adult Participation Form**

oday's Date:	
Program:	
Personal Information	
Participant Name:	
Cell Phone: Prin	nary Email:
Street Address:	
City, State, Zip Code:	
Caregiver/Emergency Contact	
Name:	
Cell Phone: Prin	nary Email:
Street Address:	
City, State, Zip Code:	
Hold Harmless: I hereby indemnify and hold har that may arise by enrolling my child/children in the state of	mless Westminster Presbyterian Church from any and all issues ne program.
Signature	date
	photograph to be taken while participating in programs of that these pictures may be used for promotional purposes in e.
No Yes Please call me to discuss	
Signature	date

#### South Carolina Law Child Protection SECTION 63-7-20.6

"Child abuse or neglect" or "harm" occurs when:

- (a) the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare:
- (i) inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the child physical or mental injury or engages in acts or omissions which present a substantial risk of physical or mental injury to the child, including injuries sustained as a result of excessive corporal punishment, but excluding corporal punishment or physical discipline which:
  - (A) is administered by a parent or person in loco parentis;
  - (B) is perpetrated for the sole purpose of restraining or correcting the child;
  - (C) is reasonable in manner and moderate in degree;
  - (D) has not brought about permanent or lasting damage to the child; and
  - (E) is not reckless or grossly negligent behavior by the parents;
- (ii) commits or allows to be committed against the child a sexual offense as defined by the laws of this State or engages in acts or omissions that present a substantial risk that a sexual offense as defined in the laws of this State would be committed against the child;
- (iii) fails to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or education as required under Article 1 of Chapter 65 of Title 59, supervision appropriate to the child's age and development, or health care though financially able to do so or offered financial or other reasonable means to do so and the failure to do so has caused or presents a substantial risk of causing physical or mental injury. However, a child's absences from school may not be considered abuse or neglect unless the school has made efforts to bring about the child's attendance, and those efforts were unsuccessful because of the parents' refusal to cooperate. For the purpose of this chapter "adequate health care" includes any medical or nonmedical remedial health care permitted or authorized under state law;
  - (iv) abandons the child;
- (v) encourages, condones, or approves the commission of delinquent acts by the child including, but not limited to, sexual trafficking or exploitation, and the commission of the acts are shown to be the result of the encouragement, condonation, or approval;
- (vi) commits or allows to be committed against the child female genital mutilation as defined in Section 16-3-2210 or engages in acts or omissions that present a substantial risk that the crime of female genital mutilation would be committed against the child; or
- (vii) has committed abuse or neglect as described in subsubitems (i) through (vi) such that a child who subsequently becomes part of the person's household is at substantial risk of one of those forms of abuse or neglect; or
- (b) a child is a victim of trafficking in persons as defined in Section 16-3-2010, including sex trafficking, regardless of whether the perpetrator is a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare. Identifying a child as a victim of trafficking in persons does not create a presumption that the parent, guardian, or other individual responsible for the child's welfare abused, neglected, or harmed the child.



# **Making Disciples**

"Why were you searching for me? Did you not know I would be in my Father's house?"

WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PC (USA)

#### **Protecting**

#### Our Children, Youth, and Vunerable Adults

Westminster Presbyterian Church is committed to providing for the safety of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults while they are in our care.

All staff and volunteers have completed a background check before entering into service with our children and receive training on the care and nurture of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We are committed to having two adults present in all programs with children, youth, and vulnerable adults and to maintaining a safe environment. Our complete policy and procedure guide for the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults can be found on our website.





## Welcoming the Children



## Nurturing Faith

At Westminster, faith grows in a loving, intergenerational community.
All are welcome. Everyone is encouraged to ask big questions, offer growing gifts, take risks and make mistakes!



**Fellowship** 



Worship



Learning



**Service** 



"And Jesus took a child and put him in the midst of them; and taking the child in his arms, he said to them,

'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'."

adapted from Mark 9:36-37

## Sundays at WPC

Nursery 8:45 - 11:15

Sunday School 9:00 - 9:45

Worship 10:00 - 11:00

Third Sunday Fellowship Lunch 11:15 - 12:15

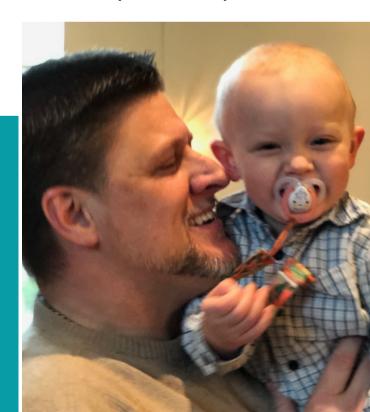
#### **YOU ARE**

### A Beloved Child of God

You are welcome here!

Here we will seek to show you God's love. Here we will share our biggest hurts, our greatest joys, our deepest sorrows and our highest hopes.

Here we will learn how to be family, God's family... learning, growing, worshipping, serving, and playing together. Showing God's love and grace to those in our family and those beyond our family.



#### APPENDIX G: INCIDENT REPORT



#### **Incident Report Form**

Date of incident	Time of incident
Name of the Person Involved	
(A separate form should be completed to keep the information confidential)	for each person involved in order
Address	
Name of Parent/Guardian/Caregiver	
Contact Phone	
Location of Incident	
Name of person(s) who witnessed the	incident
Name	Phone
Name	Phone
Name	Phone
Please describe incident as seen/heard and actions taken	

#### APPENDIX G: INCIDENT REPORT

Any additional relevant information, please document	
Signature of person completing this form	Date
This form should be used to report accident, injury, o abuse.	r any suspicion of
Upon completion of this form, immediate contact sho Pastor/Head of Staff and other persons responsible for Copies should be made and distributed as follows:	
Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Confidential Office File	
Pastor Person in Charge of Program Area	