

College Hill Reformed Church Safe Church Policy

Foundations:

- We seek to glorify God with our actions, particularly in how we deal with the most vulnerable among us and recognize the worth of all people as image bearers of God.
- We commit ourselves to respect other people's minds, emotions, and bodies and have adopted this Safe Church Policy as the criteria according to which we will address the issues of abuse within the church.
- We acknowledge and accept the trust granted to us by those who are taking part in church activities, their families, and the wider community. We commit ourselves to striving to ensure that all our actions are God honoring and morally upright.
- We believe that churches ought to be places of safety and refuge for children, young people, and others, where they can feel safe from any threat when on church property, involved in activities operated by the church or accessing services provided by the church.
- We believe that the church should be a place where people can disclose abuse and have it dealt with in a compassionate, timely, and effective manner.

Abuse Prevention:

- We will ensure as far as possible that all people in positions of authority within the church and/or working with children and young people are aware of the appropriate standard of conduct and boundaries. We require those who work on behalf of the church to indicate their agreement with this policy statement and work towards providing an environment that prevents and responds appropriately to abuse.
- We will make use of the "Safe Church" church school recordings and the [12 Church Cares training sessions](#) found at www.churchcares.com.
- We will seek to abide by all the requirements of PA Act 153, which requires background checks for all who serve alongside our youth in a regular capacity.
- Nursery: Two unrelated adults will be assigned to work in the nursery during both church school and worship.
- Church school monitor: A member of the Youth Nurture Committee will float to randomly observe classes and nursery during the church school time.

Abuse Response:

- We are committed to establishing a process that strives for wisdom, mercy, and justice. We will ensure as far as possible that a swift and compassionate response is the priority in all allegations, even at a time when it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate, through offering assistance, protection and care without passing judgment or prejudicing the rights of the alleged offender. We acknowledge that concealing the truth is contrary to the character of God, unjust to victims and a disservice to offenders.
- We will establish a College Hill "Safe Church Team" which will be made up of an elder, a deacon, and three women from the congregation. The Safe Church Team will work to ensure that all matters of abuse within the church are addressed properly.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be reported to the appropriate authorities, both internal and external, and be overseen by the College Hill Reformed Church "Safe Church Team". All allegations will be investigated thoroughly according to our procedures.
- We will take a victim centered approach in cases of abuse, which simply means that our

initial and primary concern will be for the safety and well being of the victim.

- We understand and value the need for support to be given to all parties involved in an allegation, including the aggrieved person and the alleged offender, and we will actively seek to provide this support.
- We acknowledge the personal and public difficulties that a false, misconceived, or malicious allegation, can cause for the person accused. We will take whatever steps are possible to address these difficulties.
- We desire to know the full extent of the problem of abuse and the causes of such behavior within the church. We strive to be aware of and to meet our legal responsibilities and obligations in relation to prevention and reporting requirements.
- Irrespective of any other action that may be taken by authorities outside the church, the church reserves the right to exercise its powers according to the Book of Church Discipline wherever this action is deemed necessary.