

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church Children, Youth, Volunteers and Staff Protection Policy

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I. OVERVIEW

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC) is committed to maintaining a safe environment for every child and young person involved in its program ministry. In December 1993, the National Child Protection Act established levels of reasonable care, which is legally required of all institutions caring for children and youth. The law encourages states to require that all childcare providers be qualified by references, employment history and, if necessary, criminal reference checks.

No policy can be crafted to cover every possible circumstance. Therefore, SMPC's leadership will apply the following guidelines and requirements sensitively and sensibly, and always to the end of protecting all parties reasonably and well.

Adults are encouraged to be sensitive to and aware of the potential for abuse and to appearances of abuse. They should not hesitate to caution others if they observe activities which are, or might appear to be, inappropriate. A report of suspected abuse should always be made in order to protect all minors.

Proper monitoring and pick-up procedures should be followed before and after events until all minors are safely in the custody of parents or guardians. A child should never be left alone to wait for transportation.

Special attention should be given to supervision during overnight and off-campus activities.

Guest groups who use SMPC's facilities are expected to understand and comply with this policy.

This policy should be periodically reviewed and updated.

II. PURPOSE, APPLICABILITY, SCOPE, AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE POLICY

The session, staff, leadership and members of SMPC are committed to maintaining a safe environment in which minors are protected from sexual, emotional, or physical abuse and neglect. The goal of this Children, Youth, Volunteers and Staff Protection Policy (the “Policy”) is to protect minors in church programs, to educate workers and caregivers concerning abuse issues, and to protect staff and volunteers, as well as the church as a whole, from unfounded allegations of abuse and neglect.

For purposes of this Policy, the term “minor” shall include any individual enrolled in an approved SMPC program or activity:

- Under 18 years old and considered minors under the law;
- 18 years of age or older who remain enrolled in high school; and,
- Vulnerable adults, 18 years of age or older, defined as legally incompetent persons.

In addition:

- A child is defined here as 5th grade and younger.
- Youth are defined here as 6th grade-12th grade.

The terms “minor,” “child” and “youth” may be used interchangeably in this Policy.

This Policy is intended:

- To be faithful to our baptismal vows as we seek to welcome minors and remove stumbling blocks.
- To provide a safe and secure environment for minors at SMPC.
- To protect minors from sexual, physical, and emotional abuse while participating in SMPC activities, both on campus and off campus.
- To provide a mechanism to address reported concerns and subsequent actions.
- To guide SMPC as an institution in the conduct of its employees and volunteers and prevent incidents and allegations of child abuse.
- To protect adult volunteers, employees, and SMPC from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

Applicability

This Policy applies to persons including SMPC employees and volunteers participating in any Children and Youth programs and ministries of SMPC, including but not limited to:

- Classes
- Nurseries and childcare (at any time)
- Children’s Worship
- Youth programs (including Big Youth Group (BYG), Confirmation, Retreats, Trips, and other covered activities)
- Vacation Bible School

- SMPC Preschool
- Children and Youth choirs

All approved outside groups that meet on the SMPC Campus and work with minors are required to review and acknowledge this Policy by executing an Outside Organization Acknowledgement Form (see Appendix F), specifying that the group takes full responsibility for the screening, training and conduct of their staff and volunteers while using SMPC's facilities or operating under SMPC's sponsorship. This includes outside groups, such as Scouting America and Girl Scouts of the USA, governed by adult volunteer and youth protection policies established by their respective national organizations. Such approved outside groups are expected to meet the spirit of this Policy, and are not subject to its individual requirements.

Implementation of this policy may include, but not be limited to:

- Selection of staff, teachers, volunteers, care givers and others involved in activities with minors.
- Orientation and training of these individuals
- Supervision of these individuals
- Reporting of incidents of alleged child sexual, emotional, or physical abuse or neglect
- Responding to incidents or allegations of abuse or neglect
- Monitoring the policy and procedures to ensure compliance

We recognize that youth and children are entrusted to the care of adults in a wide variety of church programs and activities, both on and off-campus, and also in SMPC approved programs operated by others on church property. These include education, fellowship, worship, training, recreational and other types of programs. The minors must be free to participate in these programs and activities without intimidation, coercion, or abuse of any type. This general policy is applicable to all people, whether compensated staff, volunteers, church members, visitors or guests. However, no single policy can apply evenly and properly to such a range of activities.

Scope: Who is Covered by this Policy?

- This Policy supersedes all prior SMPC child and youth protection policy statements.
- All employees of SMPC are governed by this Policy.
- All volunteers of SMPC who work with minors are governed by this Policy.

Child Worker and Youth Worker Term defined as:

- Any volunteer or employee who works with children or youth in any SMPC approved program, ministry, or other capacity at SMPC. Child/Youth Workers may be collectively labeled "workers" herein.

Abuse is defined as:

North Carolina General Statute (NC GS 7B-101) defines what is child abuse and child neglect.

Physical Abuse is defined as any child younger than 18 whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caregiver:

- Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the child a serious physical injury by other than accidental means
- Creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of serious physical injury to the child by other than accidental means
- Uses or allows to be used upon the child cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures or cruel and grossly inappropriate devices to modify behavior

Sexual Abuse is defined as any child younger than 18 whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caregiver commits, permits, or encourages the commission of a violation of the following laws regarding sexual offenses by, with, or upon the child:

- First and second degree rape or sexual offense
- Rape of a child by an adult offender
- Sexual act by a custodian
- Crime against nature or incest
- Preparation of obscene photographs, slides, or motion pictures of the child
- Employing or permitting the child to assist in a violation of the obscenity laws
- Dissemination of obscene material to the child
- Displaying or disseminating material harmful to the child
- First and second degree sexual exploitation of the child
- Promoting the prostitution of the child
- Taking indecent liberties with the child

Emotional Abuse is defined by any child younger than 18 years whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caregivers creates or allows to be created serious emotional damage to the child. Serious emotional damage is evidenced by a child's severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior toward himself or others.

Inappropriate Behavior is defined as

Inappropriate behavior for the purposes of this policy means bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct and victimization.

Profanity is defined as

Profanity includes curse words, swear words, or other language considered vulgar or offensive, to include but not be limited to slurs, hate speech, sexually explicit remarks or derogatory comments.

Responsibility for Implementation and Compliance

At SMPC, the adult responsible for each program is tasked with implementing this Policy. Initial enforcement lies with that program leader, with oversight and final authority resting with the Personnel Committee and/or the Session. Outside groups using SMPC facilities are responsible for ensuring their own compliance with the Policy and must sign a form acknowledging their agreement to do so. Failure to follow the Policy may result in disciplinary action, including termination, removal from the program, and/or revocation of facility use.

III. SELECTING AND TRAINING CHILD/YOUTH WORKERS (“WORKERS”)

All staff, volunteers, church members and guests who wish to work with children or youth in SMPC sponsored programs or events are subject to the guidelines listed in this Policy. The staff person for each ministry will determine who is invited to volunteer with minors.

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING CHILD/YOUTH WORKERS

These guidelines apply to all individuals who work with minors at SMPC, other than individuals working solely with an approved outside organization. Each applicable individual must sign a Volunteer Agreement Form (see Appendix D) acknowledging this Policy. Each program area of the church is responsible for ensuring that proper supervision is in place for its programs and activities which may include, but not be limited to:

- Workers who are volunteers should be a member or constituent for a minimum of 6 months at SMPC to be eligible to apply to work with minors. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis for parents who are volunteering in programs where their children are present.
- Workers who have infrequent direct contact or contact only in group settings should attend a policy training session and have a criminal background check.
- Workers with long-term, ongoing, direct contact with minors one-on-one should be subject to the above requirements plus a personal interview with the program director and a criminal background check.
- No persons who are known by SMPC to have been convicted of minor abuse will be permitted to work in any capacity in a church-sponsored activity for minors.
- Workers who observe questionable or inappropriate behavior involving minors must report it as soon as possible to the supervisor. (See *Section VII Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Allegations* below.)
- Sexual offenders - at no time is a person known by SMPC to be a sexual offender to be assigned to ministries with minors. At no time is a known sexual offender to congregate with minors. At no time is a known sexual offender allowed in areas of the church or grounds dedicated to children and youth or in use primarily by children and youth.
- Exceptions to these Guidelines, as outlined in the table below, may be made only by the Director of Spiritual Formation, Associate Pastor, or Pastor and reported to the Personnel Committee in writing.

Employees/volunteers	Criminal Background check	Reference check	Training	Interview	Drivers License Check
Employees with frequent, ongoing, direct interaction with minors	X	X	X	X	X
Employees with Infrequent interaction with minors	X	As needed	X	X	As needed
Volunteers with frequent, ongoing, direct interaction with minors	X	As needed	X	X	As needed (required if driving minors)
Volunteers with Infrequent interaction with minors	X		X		As needed
Volunteers who are not members or have been members for < 6 months	X	As needed	X	X	As needed

TRAINING WORKERS

- All employees, all church officers, and all volunteers who work with minors should attend a training session that reviews and explains this Policy, and the reasons for it and to sign the relevant documents regarding child and youth protection.
- The church will offer regular training opportunities. The Training may include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - The theological and legal need for the Child Protection Policy
 - Preconditions for child sexual abuse to occur.
 - Examples of inappropriate conduct and what not to do
 - Church policies governing working with minors.
 - Two Adult Policy
 - Open Door Policy
 - Procedures for reporting allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protection issues
 - Supervising and chaperoning minors

IV. SUPERVISING AND MONITORING

For each activity or event involving a child or youth, a responsible adult must be designated . In most cases, it will be the person who is planning, organizing, or putting on the event. It is incumbent on her or him to establish oversight that is appropriate to the age, gender, number of participants, and activity planned. In most cases, two adults should be present with and mindful of the participants. Some events will require more adult monitors. Minors should never be left unattended.

Circumstances of each event should be planned according to this Policy to the end that children and youth are kept safe.

Adult/Child/Youth Ratios

- The recommended adult/child/youth ratios for chaperones for any ministry with minors should be 1:10, however, best practice recommends 1:6. Gender balance is suggested.
- Recommended ratios for children ages four and under are:
 - 1:4 for infants up to one year old
 - 1:6 for one and two year olds
 - 1:8 for three and four year olds
- The recommended adult/child/youth ratios for chaperones for overnight trips should be 1:6, however, best practices would recommend 1:4 or 1:5. Gender balance (for example, at least two male and two female adult chaperones) is required.

Two-Adult Policy

- At least two adults, trained and screened in this Policy, should supervise all church-sponsored programs and activities involving minors, whether on or off campus.
- Adults should remain in sight of one another at all times except in emergency situations.
- Non-screened volunteers do not count in the Two-Adult Policy. Non-screened volunteers will always be accompanied by a screened employee and/or volunteer leader.
- It is permissible for one adult driver to transport several minors in a single vehicle in a convoy of vehicles traveling to or from an event.
- A married couple counts as one adult since spouses cannot be compelled to testify against one another in a court of law.
- Adults in leadership roles are expected to avoid situations where they are alone with minors by having leadership teams of at least two adults for all activities.
- The presence of two or more adults prevents circumstances where child abuse could occur or be alleged, allows shared leadership, and facilitates appropriate discipline.
- This two-adult policy extends to all overnight and off-campus-related events. Under no circumstances should one adult alone take or accompany minors on an overnight outing, unless they are the minor's parent or legal guardian.

- When one-on-one interactions between minors and employees/volunteers are necessary (e.g., in emergency situations), care must be taken to conduct the meeting in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. Another adult must have knowledge of the employee/volunteer's whereabouts and with whom they are meeting.
- For regular church programs, the requirement of two adults may be excepted if classroom doors are left open (doors with windows may be closed) AND hall monitors are provided for periodic observation of the activities in the room.
- Situations where a single adult is alone with a single minor are to be avoided at all times. If a situation arises in which an adult is alone with a minor (i.e., an emergency situation), the adult should notify another adult in a leadership role before and/or after the period during which they are alone with the minor.
- Restroom supervision:
 - SMPC employees and volunteers will always use proper supervision when children are using public bathrooms such as making sure suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities.
 - SMPC employees and volunteers will call on leaders who may be "floating" from room to room to assist with restroom supervision in order to maintain the two-adult rule.
 - Children will be sent in pairs, and whenever possible, with an SMPC employee or volunteer who will stand in the doorway in visual sight of another adult while children are using the restroom. This Policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the SMPC employees and volunteers (i.e. not being alone with a child). If SMPC employees and volunteers are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.

Open Door Policy

- Doors to rooms in which minors are present are to remain open.
- If noise increases to a level that disturbs other classes, the door may be shut as long as there is clear glass in at least half the door, nothing impedes vision through the glass, and at least two adults are present.
- Employees and volunteer leaders are expected to avoid any situation in which they could be alone with minors or out of sight of others except in emergency situations. This is to protect: minors against situations in which abuse might occur, and adults and SMPC against false accusations of child abuse.

Music Lesson Policy

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC) allows qualified music teachers, who may or may not be members of the church staff, to offer private music lessons on church property. These lessons often involve one-on-one instruction between a minor and an adult teacher. In order to maintain a safe and accountable environment, the following guidelines apply:

- Minors Who Are Not of Driving Age
 - A parent or legal guardian must remain on-site during the lesson.

- The parent or guardian must wait in the hallway outside the lesson room, and the door to the room must remain open at all times.
- Teenagers with a Valid Driver's License
 - Parents or guardians may choose to allow their teen to attend music lessons independently.
 - In this case, the student and teacher may be alone in the building during the lesson.
 - A waiver form must be signed by the parent or guardian acknowledging this arrangement and granting permission.
- Parent Preference to Remain On-Site
 - Even if a student has a valid driver's license, parents may choose to remain in the hallway with the door open during the lesson.
 - This preference should also be indicated on the signed waiver form.
- Waiver Requirement
 - All parents/guardians of minors receiving music instruction at SMPC must complete and return the SMPC Music Lesson Waiver Form prior to the first lesson.
 - Teachers are responsible for ensuring this documentation is on file before instruction begins.
- Policy Enforcement
 - Music teachers and parents are jointly responsible for complying with this policy.
 - Failure to follow these guidelines may result in suspension of lesson privileges or use of SMPC facilities.

V. WELCOMING ALL

Our Commitment to Inclusion

1. We believe God's grace is unlimited, the Holy Spirit is at work within all people, and all persons are God's beloved children. Our leaders, staff, and congregation strive to demonstrate what it means to be a fully inclusive body of Christ.
2. The following best practices and procedures ensure accommodation for all individuals, fostering a safe and inclusive community:
 - Make no assumptions about a person's sexual orientation or identity. Identity can be fluid, especially for minors, so approach each conversation with openness and without assumptions.
 - Do not enforce or reinforce gender stereotypes.
 - Acknowledge and celebrate an individual's preferred name.
 - Respect an individual's privacy. If someone shares their sexual orientation or gender identity in confidence, honor that trust. We will strive to provide a safe space and minister to each individual. Do not share this information with other leaders, students, or parents without permission. Encourage students to share with their parents, but always keep their confidence.
 - Be intentional about creating a safe environment and culture by promoting awareness and including training for leaders on preventing homophobic language and bullying. There will be zero tolerance for exclusivity or language that is homophobic, bullying, judgmental, or dismissive by a child, youth, employee or volunteer.

LGBTQIA+ Inclusion in Programming and Activities

When assigning LGBTQIA+ persons to groups for programming and activities:

- The Two-Adult and Open-Door policies provide the first level of protection for both minors, as well as for volunteers in group settings.
- If changes or decisions need to be made regarding overnight accommodations or restroom use, please speak to the staff member assigned to the program area, who will work with families to accommodate each person in a way that makes them feel comfortable.

VI. SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Each minor participating in an SMPC program must have a parent or guardian review and execute a Parental Consent Form for Electronic Communications (see Appendix C) specifying permitted electronic communications with their child and permitted use of their child's image. Such consent may be updated or revoked at any time by written notification to SMPC. The following requirements apply to all social media and electronic communications involving minors at SMPC.

1. Interaction with Minors on Social Media

- Employees and volunteers working with minors **should not** engage in one-on-one private messaging (e.g., direct messages, text messages, or chat apps) with minors.
- If digital communication with minors is necessary (e.g., for event details), another adult (such as a parent, guardian, or another church leader) must be copied.
- Employees and volunteers **should not** “friend” or “follow” minors from their personal social media accounts. Instead, any interaction should take place through official church social media channels.
- If a minor contacts an employee or volunteer in a private message on any platform or text message, the employee or volunteer should inform the minor that it is the Church's policy to add another adult to the message. The employee or volunteer can offer suggestions for adults to add but must add the adult before engaging.

2. Posting Photos & Videos of Minors

- Employees and volunteers should obtain written parental or guardian consent before posting any photos or videos of minors on church social media.
- Employees and volunteers should not tag minors in social media posts.
- Employees and volunteers should avoid posting personal information about minors (e.g., full names, locations, or schedules).

3. Content Guidelines for Minor Engagement

- Any content shared with minors via the church's social media must align with SMPC's mission and values and be appropriate for their age group.

4. Reporting & Accountability

- Employees and volunteers must report any inappropriate or concerning social media interactions involving minors to the Personnel Committee Chair or to the senior pastor.
- If a minor discloses any sensitive information (e.g., abuse, harm, or illegal activity) via social media, employees must **follow mandatory reporting procedures** according to [North Carolina State law](#) and notify church leadership immediately.

VII. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS

The following steps are to be followed in the event of an allegation or incident of abuse.

1. **Remember: discretion is paramount.** The confidentiality of all people involved should be safeguarded.
2. **Remove the child from the situation.** The safety and security of the child should be assured before further steps are taken.
3. **Report the incident.** The person reporting the incident should document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances within 24 hours. Such details as time, date, place, persons involved, witnesses and a description of what happened should be included. The written report may be unsigned, and report may be made by telephone to the Department of Social Services (704-336-2273), in the presence of a third person who will be able to verify that the oral report was made. Confidentiality should be used to protect all individuals involved: reporter, minor, and accused.
4. **Notify church authorities.** The senior pastor (or his/her designee) should be notified of the incident or the allegation within 24 hours and should be given the written report.
5. **Document the report.** The senior pastor (or his/her designee) should document all steps taken in handling the reported incident.
6. **Ensure that the Department of Social Services has been notified.** The senior pastor (or his/her designee) must report incidents/allegations to the director of the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services within 24 hours, unless the report has been made previously. See #3 above.
7. **Avoid judgment.** The church is supportive of individuals who in good faith make reports of reasonably suspected cases of abuse or neglect. All reports will be taken seriously, but will not be judged prematurely.
8. **Notify the minor's parents/guardians.** The senior pastor (or his/her designee) should notify the parents/guardians of the alleged incident, without judgment as to the report's accuracy.
9. **Report to the Church's Insurer.** The senior pastor (or his/her designee) must make an appropriate report to the liability insurer for the church.
10. **Insulate, lovingly and without judgments, the person who has been accused from further contact with minors.** Any person accused of abuse or molestation should be treated with dignity and support. That person must be immediately relieved of further responsibilities with minors until the investigation is completed and all allegations are resolved. It is important that all parties remember not to judge the person or the circumstances until a thorough investigation has been completed.

APPENDIX A:

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC)

Youth Protection Code of Conduct

1. SMPC employees and volunteers will not verbally, emotionally, physically, or sexually abuse minors.
2. SMPC employees and volunteers will not discipline minors by using physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
3. Physical restraint should be used only in situations necessary to protect the minors, other minors, or staff from harm.
4. SMPC employees and volunteers should provide proper supervision and exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment at all times.
5. SMPC employees and volunteers should avoid situations during SMPC programs in which they would be alone with a single minor and cannot be observed or monitored by others. As adults supervise minors, they should space themselves in a way that other adults can see them.
6. SMPC employees and volunteers are expected to observe the Two Adult Rule and Open Door Policy in their interaction with minors at all times except in emergency situations.
7. SMPC employees and volunteers should only visit a minor's home in the presence of a parent or legal guardian.
8. Restroom supervision:
 - a. SMPC employees and volunteers should always use proper supervision when children are using public bathrooms such as making sure suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities.
 - b. SMPC employees and volunteers may call on leaders who may be "floating" from room to room to assist with restroom supervision in order to maintain the two-adult rule.
 - c. Children should be sent in pairs, and whenever possible, with an SMPC employee or volunteer who may stand in the doorway in visual sight of another adult while children are using the restroom. This Policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the SMPC employees and volunteers (i.e. not being alone with a minor). If SMPC employees and volunteers are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.

9. SMPC employees and volunteers will respect the rights of minors not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Adults will discourage minors from touching others in an inappropriate manner.
10. SMPC employees and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children and youth entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the designated adult in charge who will report to the senior pastor or designee.
11. SMPC employees and volunteers should release children only to an authorized parent or guardian or other individual authorized by such parent or guardian. In the case of individuals other than the parent or guardian, written permission is recommended but verbal permission from a person known to be the authorized parent or guardian is acceptable.
12. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or being impaired by legally prescribed drugs during church working hours or church-sponsored programs is prohibited.
13. Smoking or use of tobacco during church programs is prohibited.
14. Profanity, inappropriate language or jokes, and any kind of harassment in the presence of Children, Youth, or Parents is prohibited.
15. SMPC employees and volunteers will not share inappropriate details of their personal life or ask minors to share inappropriate details through any form of communication: written, verbal, or electronic.
16. SMPC employees and adult volunteers may not date program participants under 18 years of age.
17. SMPC employees and volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and attend training sessions on the subject, as instructed by a supervisor.
18. SMPC employees and volunteers are required to report to the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Director of Spiritual Formation, or personnel committee any circumstances under this Policy that affect their ability to work with minors.
19. SMPC employees and volunteers are encouraged to be aware of, to help remedy, and to report situations where risk of inappropriate treatment exists.
20. SMPC employees and volunteers who observe hurtful, inappropriate or malicious behavior, or evidence of bullying, among minors should take appropriate action to mitigate or deescalate the situation to ensure the protection of all.

APPENDIX B:

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC) Children and Youth Ministry Communication Policy

Texting, emailing, and other forms of electronic communication have become common today, especially among students. While these tools can be valuable for youth ministry, their improper use can have serious consequences. **For these purposes, “youth” includes minors under 18 years old and workers refers to any SMPC employee or volunteer who is working with youth.**

Promoting Safety

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC) is committed to promoting safety and fostering a healthy environment for communication between youth ministry leaders and students participating in our programs. To that end, SMPC has developed the following guidelines:

1. Staff and Youth Ministry volunteers who wish to communicate with minors via text messaging, email, social media, or other electronic means must first acknowledge and sign this policy below. This policy will cover best practices, limitations, and legal requirements for electronic communication within youth and children’s ministry. **SMPC will only communicate with minors with parental consent via email, group text or phone call and will always include two adults on any communication**
2. Staff and volunteers must not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or with minors involved in ministry activities.
3. Except in an emergency, staff and volunteers s not share any personal information about a minor without prior written consent from the youth ministry participant and their parent or guardian with the SMPC Parental Consent Form for Communication and Social Media Use. This applies to group texts, emails, or any public electronic communication. Personal information includes, but is not limited to, a minor’s name, phone number, email address, or photograph.
4. Workers should encourage students to limit cell phone use during ministry programs, except in an emergency, to contact a parent or guardian, or for calls specifically approved by a leader.
5. Youth ministry staff and volunteers will periodically educate students about this Youth Ministry Communication Policy, including the dangers of inappropriate electronic conduct such as cyberbullying.
6. If a staff or volunteer becomes aware of possible child abuse through electronic media, they must immediately notify the Personnel Committee Chair. SMPC will consult legal counsel and report abuse as required by law.
7. All information, images, or videos shared electronically through public ministry communication channels, even on personal devices, are not considered confidential.
8. To participate in ministry electronic communications, minors and their parents or guardians must sign a consent form.

9. Minors who violate this policy may lose electronic communication privileges or be removed from the ministry program. Parents will be notified immediately of any violations.
10. For safety reasons, workers driving on ministry business must use a hands-free device if making calls. If receiving a call while driving, they should use a hands-free device or safely pull off the road before answering.
11. Workers transporting minors must avoid all phone use—including hands-free—while driving, especially in heavy traffic, hazardous weather conditions, or where prohibited by law.
12. Workers must never send or read text messages while driving.
13. Staff members and volunteers should not communicate with minors through disappearing messaging platforms (e.g., Snapchat or similar apps). These types of apps do not provide a clear or reviewable record of communication, which is essential for maintaining transparency and accountability in interactions with minors.
14. SMPC has established official websites, groups, pages and accounts on social media for official church news and business. Official channels must be sanctioned by the SMPC director of communications. Only users designated as “administrators” by SMPC’s director of communications may operate SMPC’s official channels. Any account that posts on behalf of SMPC or in SMPC’s likeness on any social media or online platform must be approved by SMPC’s director of communications. Individuals who will be posting must be identified up front and undergo proper training. Any user found to have violated this policy will be referred to the Personnel Committee and asked to remove any pages or posts.

APPENDIX C

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC)

Parental Consent Form for Electronic Communication

Dear Parent/Guardian,

At South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC), we value the safety and privacy of all minors involved in our ministries. To ensure clear communication while maintaining appropriate boundaries, we request your consent for your child's participation in electronic communication and social media activities related to SMPC programs.

Please complete and sign this form to indicate your preferences regarding how SMPC may communicate with your child and use their images in church-related media.

1. Communication with Minors

SMPC staff and approved volunteers may need to communicate with minors about events, programs, or pastoral care. To ensure safety, we follow these guidelines:

- Church communication may take place through **email, group text messages, or through public posts on our church social media accounts.**
- No **one-on-one private messaging** between minors and adults.
- All digital communication will include **at least one other adult (e.g., a parent, guardian, or another church leader).**
- SMPC will not contact a minors via direct messages on our church's social media channels. If a minor contacts SMPC through its social media channel direct messages, SMPC staff will respond to the minor via phone call, text or email with another adult copied. The church's social media channels include: Instagram - @smpcyouth and @southmeckpres and Facebook - @southmecklenburgpresbyterian

I consent to sharing my child's email and/or phone number and give permission for my child to be contacted by SMPC staff and volunteers via:

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Email (with another adult copied)
- ☐ Group text messages (no private one-on-one messaging via digital communications or social media platforms)
- ☐ Group messaging apps
- ☐ I do **not** give permission for any electronic communication with my child.

Child's Email (if applicable): _____

Child's Phone Number (if applicable): _____

Please note: Church policy states that if a minor contacts an employee or volunteer in a private message (e.g., direct messages, text messages, or chat apps), the employee or volunteer must inform the minor that it is the Church's policy to add another adult to the message. The employee or volunteer can offer suggestions for adults to add but must add the adult before engaging. The staff will not reply to social media direct messages.

2. Use of Photos & Videos on Church Social Media & Publications

SMPC may occasionally take photos or videos of church events, which may be shared in:

- Church social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram)
- Church website or newsletters
- Printed materials (e.g., brochures, worship bulletins)

I give permission for my child's image to be used in:

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Church social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
- ☐ Church website and electronic newsletters
- ☐ Printed church materials (e.g., brochures, bulletins)
- ☐ I do **not** give permission for my child's image to be used in any church media.

Parent/Guardian Consent & Signature

Minor's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Email: _____

Parent/Guardian Phone: _____

By signing below, I confirm that:

- I understand and approve of the communication guidelines set by SMPC.
- I have indicated my preferences regarding my child's communication and image use.
- I may update or revoke this consent at any time by notifying SMPC in writing.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Minor Name: _____

Minor Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC) Youth Volunteer Agreement Form

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC) is committed to maintaining a safe, nurturing, and faith-filled environment for all children, youth, volunteers, and staff. All employees and volunteers working with minors are required to read and adhere to the *SMPC Children, Youth, Volunteers and Staff Protection Policy*.

Please complete the following acknowledgment form after reviewing the policy.

Name (please print): _____

Role at SMPC (circle all that apply):

Employee Volunteer Other: _____

Circle Ministry Area(s) Involved: Children Youth Music Preschool Other:_____

Acknowledgment and Agreement

By signing below, I acknowledge that:

- I have received and read the *SMPC Children, Youth, Volunteers and Staff Protection Policy* in its entirety.
- I understand the contents of the policy and agree to abide by its guidelines and expectations.
- I agree to participate in any required training and to uphold the principles of safety, accountability, and integrity in all interactions with minors at SMPC.
- I understand that failure to follow this policy may result in disciplinary action or removal from volunteer or staff responsibilities.
- I agree to promptly report any suspected abuse, policy violations, or concerning behavior in accordance with the procedures outlined in the policy.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this completed form to the SMPC office or your ministry supervisor.

For questions about the policy, contact the church office at or speak with a member of the SMPC staff.

APPENDIX E: South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC) Music Lesson Waiver Form

Qualified music teachers, who may or may not be on staff at SMPC, may offer music lessons on our campus. In some cases, music lessons involve one-on-one instruction between a minor and an adult teacher. This form outlines the supervision policies and requests parent/guardian consent where exceptions apply.

Student Name: _____ Age: _____

Parent/Guardian Name(s): _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Music Teacher's Name: _____

Supervision Policy & Acknowledgment

Please check one:

☐ My child is **under driving age**. I understand that I must remain in the hallway with the door open during all lessons.

☐ My teenager has a **valid driver's license**. I give permission for them to attend music lessons independently and acknowledge that they may be alone in the building with the music teacher.

☐ My teenager has a **valid driver's license**, but I **prefer to remain in the hallway** with the door open during their lessons.

Waiver of Liability and Consent

By signing below, I:

- Acknowledge the nature of individual music instruction at SMPC.
- Understand and accept the supervision requirements outlined above.
- Give permission for my child to participate in music lessons as specified.
- Release South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church, its staff, and its representatives from any liability resulting from failure to comply with these policies or from supervision arrangements that I have approved.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Please return this signed form to the SMPC office or to your child's music teacher before the first lesson.

APPENDIX F

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC) Outside Organization Acknowledgment Form

Use of Facilities & Child and Youth Protection Policy Compliance

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC) welcomes the use of its facilities by outside organizations. In the interest of safety, integrity, and responsible ministry, we require all groups working with children or youth on church property to comply with SMPC's **Children, Youth, Volunteers and Staff Protection Policy**.

Organization Name: _____

Primary Contact Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Acknowledgment and Agreement

By signing this form, the above-named organization acknowledges that:

- We have received and reviewed a copy of the **SMPC Children, Youth, Volunteers and Staff Protection Policy**.
- We agree to follow the expectations and procedures outlined in the policy when working with children and youth on SMPC's campus.
- We understand that **SMPC is not responsible or liable** for the actions of outside individuals or organizations that fail to adhere to the policy.
- We accept full responsibility for the training, screening, and conduct of our staff, volunteers, and representatives while using SMPC's facilities.

Signature of Organizational Representative: _____

Printed Name: _____

Title/Position: _____

Date: _____

Please return this completed form to the SMPC office prior to use of the facility.