
Contents

Introduction/Purpose.....	1
Definitions.....	2
Administrative Policy.....	5
Safeguarding Team	6
Responding to Boundary Violations	6
Responding to Abuse and Harassment.....	6
Policy on Known Sex Offenders	6

Introduction/Purpose

As a community, First Baptist Church-Jefferson City is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors, and holding abusers accountable. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cry (Psalm 9:9, 12). Our community seeks to embody Jesus's priority of justice for the vulnerable, especially children.

Abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime) when someone in a position of power and trust violates or exploits someone who is often powerless to stop it. Abuse is sadly a common reality in this world. As Christians, we cannot face abuse if we are in denial about the reality of abuse. Instead, Jesus calls us to be "wise as serpents." (Matthew 10:16). We all must become educated about abuse and take responsibility to uphold our policy.

Our goal is to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse by becoming a community that is educated on various forms of abuse and common dynamics, clarifying appropriate boundaries, and doing the challenging work of holding each other accountable. All persons should experience an environment of safety and justice and one that is free from any form of abuse.

By its very nature, our community includes interaction with vulnerable children and adults. Sadly, many within churches have acted in predatory ways toward vulnerable people, and bad actors will often seek environments with those vulnerable people. Abuse in all its forms is almost always perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Abusers utilize a variety of tactics to gain trust, deceive both victims and others within a community, and keep the abuse secret. This policy states what we all must take ownership of in our community as we walk together with God, who loves justice and hates oppression.

Definitions

Abuse: In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g., pastor, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone more vulnerable (e.g., a child, someone who is sick, elderly, disabled, student, supervisee, intern, immigrant, etc.). That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms, such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc.

Abuse, Emotional: When a person holding power and trust uses patterns of controlling and domineering behaviors such as shaming, insulting, degrading, intimidating, threatening, humiliating, and/or domineering. Bullying is a common term for acts that typically constitute emotional abuse.

Abuse, Financial: The illegal or improper use of a vulnerable person or their financial resources for another's profit or advantage. Examples of financial abuse may include taking money or property; forging a signature; getting a person to sign a deed, will, or power of attorney through deception, coercion, or undue influence; or illegally or improperly adding names to bank accounts or safety deposit boxes. The elderly, in particular, are often targeted for financial abuse.

Abuse, Physical: Non-accidental physical injury (ranging from bruises to severe fractures or death) by way of bodily contact (such as slapping, punching, pushing, beating, kicking, shaking, or striking with an object) or non-injurious contact with the goal or effect of intimidating, threatening, or controlling.

Abuse, Spiritual: A form of emotional abuse, meaning a pattern of coercive or domineering behaviors using religion, usually by a person who holds power and trust. Many acts of abuse in a religious environment will have a spiritual dimension. Examples include:

- Use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition, or sacred texts to harm.
- Compelling a person to engage in religious acts against his or her will.
- Abuse that occurs in a religious context or by a religious leader.
- Invoking divine authority to manipulate a person into meeting the needs of the abuser.
- Using spirituality or spiritual authority to dismiss a person's perspective, agency, or value.
- Attempts to use the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality to put their leadership or decisions beyond questioning or accountability.
- Attempts to spiritualize or justify harm using the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality.

Abuse Policy First Baptist Church-Jefferson City

Implemented: MM.DD.YYYY
Reviewed: MM.DD.YYYY
Revised: MM.DD.YYYY

Consent: Words or overt actions indicating a freely given agreement to the sexual act or contact. Silence or the absence of an explicit "no" does not equal consent. Physical submission by the victim - such as "freezing" or "surrendering" in fear - does not equal consent. Consent also implies the ability to say no in a mutual relationship. Children, certain vulnerable adults (based on functioning related to factors such as intellectual disabilities, age, mental health, or other vulnerabilities), or those within a power differential (e.g., with a religious leader, mentor, teacher, or supervisor) are unable to consent to sexual activity. Other circumstances, such as intoxication or unconsciousness, also render a person unable to give consent to sexual activity.¹ Deception or manipulation of a person also renders that person unable to consent.

Harassment: The act of creating an unpleasant or hostile situation by uninvited and/or unwelcome verbal or physical conduct. Common forms of harassment include bullying and acts of discrimination. Harassment can include discrimination against a specific group of people based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health condition(s), socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.

Intimate Partner Violence (Domestic Violence): A pattern of behavior where a person in or who has been in an intimate relationship uses tactics of control, belittling, isolation, fear, stalking, and/or intimidation to dominate, harm, degrade, or otherwise undermine the worth and agency of the other person in the relationship. Intimate partner violence can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, social, or financial.²

Sexual Abuse: When a person in a place of power and/or trust engages in sexual behavior with a child or an adult under their supervision, authority, mentoring, or spiritual care.

Sexual Abuse, Clergy: Sexual abuse by clergy or other leaders holding formal spiritual authority with a person under their spiritual care and/or supervision, whether an adult or a child. It is an abuse of power, whether or not this is criminalized by state law.

Sexual Acts, Non-Contact:

- Observing a person's nudity or sexual activity or allowing a person to observe sexual activity.
- Recording, photographing, transmitting, showing, viewing, streaming, or distributing intimate or sexual images, audio recordings, or sexual information of persons.

¹ For more discussion on consent including state laws see <https://www.rainn.org/articles/legal-role-consent> and https://apps.rainn.org/policy/?_ga=2.24798265.200928410.1590493313-413255437.1539433206

² For more information and examples an excellent resource is The Duluth Model at <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/>

Abuse Policy First Baptist Church-Jefferson City

Implemented: MM.DD.YYYY
Reviewed: MM.DD.YYYY
Revised: MM.DD.YYYY

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- Exposing one's genitals or inducing a person to expose their own genitals.
 - Within a power dynamic (boss-employee, doctor-patient, teacher-student, pastor-congregant, adult-child), communicating sexual desire or sexually stimulating content toward a person.

A child or other vulnerable person cannot consent to any sexual behavior with an adult or older child. An adult under the authority, care, or mentorship of a leader cannot consent to sexual activity. Even when both people are adults, and the contact is not forcible, any crossing of sexual boundaries within a power structure is not an "affair" or a "relationship" but an egregious abuse of power. Adult sexual abusers often develop an emotional and spiritual connection and then exploit it. While not always recognized as a crime according to state laws, this is a serious violation, and First Baptist Church-Jefferson City will treat it as such. If any staff person wishes to pursue a consensual romantic relationship with someone under their spiritual care or a power hierarchy within First Baptist Church-Jefferson City, they must contact their supervisor, Lead Pastor, or a Personnel Committee member for the sake of transparency and to discuss any appropriate boundaries given the power dynamics or other factors.

Sexual Assault: Sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the consent of the victim. Sexual harassment generally violates civil laws—all have a right to work or learn without being harassed—but in many cases, it is not a criminal act. Sexual assault usually refers to acts that are criminal. Forms of sexual assault include (list is not all-inclusive):

- Penetration of the victim's body, also known as rape.
- Attempted rape.
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetration of the perpetrator's body.
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching.

Sexual Contact: Any intentional touching of a person's breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, or other intimate parts. Touching may be over or under clothing and may include touching or making the person touch or making the person touch their own body. This also includes contact with non-sexual areas of the body for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator (such as with certain paraphilic disorders).

Sexual Harassment: The legal definition of Sexual Harassment by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) is "Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly on a term or condition of an individual's employment.

Abuse Policy First Baptist Church-Jefferson City

Implemented: MM.DD.YYYY
Reviewed: MM.DD.YYYY
Revised: MM.DD.YYYY

2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual.
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment."

Beyond the legal definition, harassment, sexual or otherwise, can also occur in a community, conference, or event when the people involved are not employees of the church. In accordance with our values, sexual harassment is not restricted to what is defined as sexual harassment under the law. First Baptist Church-Jefferson City considers any unwanted sexualized behavior or sexualized behavior within a power differential to be a serious form of harassment (including unwanted touch or communication, other unwanted sexual attention, or any behavior that objectifies or degrades.)

Sexual Penetration: Any act or attempted act of vaginal or anal penetration, however slight, by a person's penis, finger, other body part, or an object, and/or any oral-genital contact.

Stalking: A pattern of unwanted, fixated, and/or obsessive behavior that is intrusive and causes fear of violence, alarm, or distress. Stalking is a terrifying reality and is now recognized as a crime in all fifty states.

Examples of stalking include (from The Justice Department's Stalking Victimization Survey):

- Making unwanted phone calls/texts or sending unwanted messages or emails.
- Following or spying on the victim.
- Showing up or waiting at places without a legitimate reason.
- Leaving unwanted items, presents, or flowers.
- Posting or spreading false or confidential information about a person or victim on the internet, in a public place, or by word of mouth.

Administrative Policy

This policy shall be reviewed by the Safeguarding Team or their designees, at a minimum, in even-numbered years or as necessary. Recommended revisions will be put before the congregation for approval. It is recommended that a youth member representative be present.

Abuse Policy

First Baptist Church-Jefferson City

Implemented: MM.DD.YYYY Reviewed: MM.DD.YYYY Revised: MM.DD.YYYY
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Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Team is responsible for equipping the community of First Baptist Church-Jefferson City for effective prevention and response. The Safeguarding Team shall comprise a group of 4-6 members, and at least 50% will be women. The duties of the Safeguarding Team or their designees are detailed in a separate procedures document.

Responding to Boundary Violations

First Baptist Church-Jefferson City takes seriously all policy violations and all concerns related to respect and safety. Any person - staff, volunteer, parent, or church member - who witnesses a violation of this policy is expected to intervene if you feel safe to do so or get someone who can. Then, speak up to the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible. Furthermore, any concerns related to vulnerable persons should be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team will document all concerns or policy violations and collaborate on any appropriate response and accountability. Concerns regarding the Safeguarding Team may go to the Lead Pastor or another member of the church leadership staff.

The boundary violation(s) response process is detailed in a separate document.

Responding to Abuse and Harassment

First Baptist Church-Jefferson City is committed to providing a timely and effective response to any allegations or findings of abuse or harassment within our church. We will work to create an environment where anyone feels comfortable raising questions and concerns, coming forward with reports of any misconduct, and being proactive about preventing and responding to abuse. In responding to abuse, First Baptist Church-Jefferson City will always prioritize the safety and needs of the victim(s) and other vulnerable persons. It is difficult for victims to come forward in most circumstances. First Baptist Church-Jefferson City will do its best never to blame victims for struggling to come forward, delaying disclosure, or other common disclosure behavior.

The abuse and harassment response process is detailed in a separate document.

Policy on Known Sex Offenders

First Baptist Church-Jefferson City is committed to holding admitted or convicted offenders we believe are repentant to a high standard of accountability. Known offenders who demonstrate evidence that they are not repentant are extremely dangerous and are not welcome in our church. Jesus welcomed sinners but did not

Abuse Policy
First Baptist Church-Jefferson City

Implemented: MM.DD.YYYY Reviewed: MM.DD.YYYY Revised: MM.DD.YYYY
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command us to welcome wolves among the sheep. Known offenders who wish to have any connection to our church must be willing to undergo a process designed to assess their individual situation, ongoing repentance, and what safeguards are appropriate. This process is detailed in a separate document.