Neglect & Abuse Prevention Policies First Baptist Church Zachary, Louisiana

But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. (Luke 18:16)

First Baptist Zachary is committed to the safety and welfare of all individuals who attend any activities and ministries at First Baptist Church or sponsored events. It is the desire of First Baptist Church to provide a safe and secure environment for all individuals, especially children, women, and any persons who may be vulnerable to harm or harassment in any form. The assignment and the goal of the task force was to update existing policies to better ensure the safety of all individuals associated with First Baptist Zachary.

The policies being recommended for adoption represent many hours of collaboration, research, and evaluation by the task force. The task force is comprised of a diverse group of men and women, including pastoral staff, educators, legal professional, law enforcement, church workers of children and students, and parents.

The task force believes the implementation of these policies will enhance the safety of children, as well as women and men of all ages. The task force recommends the adoption of these policies for First Baptist Church Zachary, LA

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Part 1: Childhood Protection

Section 1: GENERAL POLICIES

<u>I. Goal</u>

It is the goal of the First Baptist Church of Zachary, LA (FBCZ) to provide a safe environment for the physical and emotional well-being of all children under the age of eighteen (18) years and adults with physical and/or judgmental limitations, who participate in church activities, including all daily or temporary programs as well as to provide an environment in which church staff, teachers and volunteer workers are protected. The church will provide all employees and volunteers a copy of these policies and enforce these policies that are designed to protect individuals and groups described above while attending scheduled activities.

II. Definitions

• Child or children - includes all students participating in our student ministry, regardless of age.

• Adults with physical and/or judgmental limitations - persons eighteen (18) years of age or older deemed unable to reliably differentiate between appropriate versus inappropriate conduct who participate in the FBCZ Special Blessings ministry.

- The two people groups described above are hereinafter referred to as *"individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect.*
- Worker(s) Employees or volunteer workers, working with individuals these policies endeavor to protect.

III. Selection and Screening Procedures for Workers

It is the goal of FBCZ to adequately screen the applications of persons desiring to work with individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect, including participants in any daily or temporary childcare programs.

IV. Classification of Workers

In order to screen workers appropriately for their responsibilities, the ministerial staff person responsible for each ministry area will categorize worker positions under one of two groups: (1) *Primary* and (2) *Secondary*. These terms refer to the relative levels of a worker's responsibility and risk within the environments of the individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect. Workers in both categories are required to complete the *Paid or Volunteer Worker Application* form (See sample in Section 4, Form #1) and meet the primary screening standards therein.

• Category 1: <u>Primary workers</u> - includes all ministerial staff persons, paid staff workers plus those volunteers applying for positions carrying roles deemed by the ministerial staff person in charge of the ministry area to carry greater responsibility or risk. Must be eighteen (18) years of age and above.

• Category 2: <u>Secondary workers</u> - individuals who regularly or occasionally provide support of supervision to the individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect in the presence of an approved primary worker. All volunteer workers under the age of eighteen (18) years will be considered secondary workers and must work under the supervision of a Category 1 worker.

V. Six-Month Rule

No volunteer in either category level will be allowed to work with individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect in any capacity until they have both (1) been a member of FBCZ for a minimum of six (6) months and (2) verifiably attended and participated in other activities of our church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time allows interaction between the church's leadership and the applicant for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect. This six month rule may be waived with the authorization by the ministerial staff person responsible for each ministry area, after consultation with other ministerial staff. If waived, ministerial staff persons must take additional steps to screen the applicant.

VI. Worker Applications

Applicants who will work with individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect must complete and sign a *Paid or Volunteer Worker Application* form (See sample in Section 4, Form #1), whether for a paid or volunteer position. The person in charge of the ministry area in which the worker would serve will review the completed worker application form which includes permission for references and criminal background checks.

The church keeps all information received in the applicant selection process confidential. Such information will be stored with access afforded only to appropriate individuals on a need-to-know basis. If the church learns of false, misleading or amended information on an application that could cause potential danger to individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect, or other liability to the church, that person will be recommended for dismissal in accordance with church policy.

VII. Criminal Background Check

A local and nationwide criminal background check and child abuse registry check is required for **all** workers before being awarded any position **except for those under the age of eighteen (18) years.** In addition, the applicant agrees to allow these checks to be repeated on a regular basis as determined by the church for as long as that person holds a paid or volunteer position in the church.

No one who has been convicted, pled guilty, or no contest to a crime involving misconduct with children or adults with judgmental limitation or to any other sexual offense or violent offense, will be allowed to work with individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect.

VIII. Identification of Workers

All workers must consent to be photographed and will wear photo identification provided by FBCZ while working with individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect.

IX. Acknowledgement of Church Policies

All workers must acknowledge in writing that they have received a copy of these policies, they understand them, and agree to abide by them prior to working with individuals or groups which these policies endeavor to protect. This requirement will be met by having workers sign the **Acknowledgement of Receipt** form (See sample in Section 4, Form #1int).

Section 2: POLICIES APPLICABLE TO ALL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY WORKERS HAVING CONTACT WITH <u>CHILDREN ONLY</u>.

I. Preschool and Children Check-In and Pickup Policy

The church will have in place an identification system requiring that only a child's parents or another person(s) eighteen (18) years or older, authorized by a child's parents must check-in and check-out the child (birth through grade 6) at any church event where the parent/guardian or their designee places a child in the care of a worker by following the check-in process. The ministerial staff person in charge of each ministry area shall ensure the above system is in place.

Children through grade 6 are not permitted to leave the area of a church activity at the conclusion of the scheduled activity until released to an authorized adult. Parents must be notified of this rule and be supportive of it in order for a child to continue participating. If a parent or guardian does not pick up a child on time, the child will be kept by their approved workers in an area where safe supervision can continue until the parent or guardian is located. Children whose parents are habitually late in picking up their child, after proper warning, will not

be allowed to continue attending the event.

No child shall be taken from church property, either unattended or in a group without specific signed parental permission.

Children from grades 7 through 12 will follow a self-check-in system.

II. Two Worker Rule

A minimum of two workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during a church activity, regardless of the number of participants, location or activity. At least one of these must be a primary worker.

• Exception: Some students (grades 7 through12) may have only one primary worker in attendance in approved cases by the ministerial staff person. In these instances, doors to classrooms will remain open, or the meeting will take place in an open area with other students and/or adults.

• In situations where two workers are scheduled but one of those does not arrive on time, or is absent for the entire event(s), the ministerial staff person overseeing the event must be notified and take whatever precautions are necessary to ensure the children's safety and protection as best he/she can.

III. Observation of Preschool and Children

Church activities for preschool and children should be scheduled in areas visible from adjoining areas. Such visibility will be maintained by leaving curtains and blinds open or by leaving the door to the room open. Reasonable exceptions to this rule may be made by the ministerial staff person where seclusion is necessary for rest, provided two approved workers are present in the room at all times. At no time will an adult meet alone with a child in any room where the door is closed or in an area where they cannot be seen.

The ministerial staff person or their designee responsible for each program shall coordinate with the respective ministry coordinators to ensure ongoing supervision of all workers. This should include regular unannounced visits into classes and other program sites.

IV. Ratio of Workers to Children

It is required that a reasonable ratio of workers to children is maintained at all times involving the supervision of children. The ministerial staff person responsible for the ministry program shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of workers to children giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.

V. Release of Claims

Prior to participating in an event defined below, a Release Form must be executed by a parent or the legal guardian of a child. The form will remain on file in the church office and remain in force and effect unless and until revoked in writing by the parent or legal guardian and which revocation is actually delivered to FBCZ. Defined events mentioned above include:

- 1. Any event involving travel from the main church campus, or
- 2. Any event involving overnight stay away from a child's home.

While the church prefers that this form remain on file for any and all church scheduled events involving children, reality dictates that it is sometimes impossible, at other times over burdensome and/or impractical. Ministerial staff person in charge will communicate verbally, electronically or in writing, with parent or guardian of child wanting to participate in church event.

VI. Special Situations

At no time shall a person over the age of eighteen (18) years, who is not qualified as either a primary or secondary worker, remain in areas where individuals this policy endeavors to protect are engaged in official activities. Exceptions may be made to this rule for special guests or others at the discretion of the ministerial staff person in charge of the activity, provided that, as far as practicable that person shall be accompanied at all times by a primary and shall not be left alone at any time with any individual this policy endeavors to protect. An additional exception to this rule may be made for adults with judgmental limitations participating as part of the church's Special Blessings Ministry who may participate in programs with children when deemed appropriate by the Special Blessings Ministry leaders and the ministerial staff person in charge of the activity provided that at all times, said adult participant of the Special Blessings Ministry is accompanied by a primary and is not left alone with any other individual this policy endeavors to protect.

VII. Worker Training

All primary works, volunteer and paid, are required to complete child protection training as deemed necessary by ministerial staff and any oversight group.

SECTION 3: Identifying and Reporting Suspected Abuse

I. Informing Workers

Ministerial staff person who oversees ministry areas are responsible to see that all paid and volunteer workers receive a copy of the SUMMARY OF LOUISIANA CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT REPORTING

LAW (See Section 4, Form #3) and sign a copy of the **Acknowledgement of Receipt of the Abuse Prevention Policy** form (See sample in Section 4, Form #4)

II. Reporting Policy/Reporting Required

A. Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that an individual suffers from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, welfare or neglect, in our church, at home, or under the control of another individual or organization must, **by law**, report that belief according to the following procedure:

a. The worker shall report such belief to the ministerial staff person in charge of that particular ministry, then in that official's presence, report the suspicion to **Louisiana Office of Child Welfare 800-452-5437**.

b. The pastor, or his agent, will notify the parents of the child (unless the parent is the person suspected of the abuse or neglect).

c. The pastor, or his agent, will notify the appropriate legal counsel.

d. The person reporting a suspected case of abuse to the LA Office of Child Welfare shall provide the ministerial staff person in charge of the ministry area he/she is supervising a copy of the report made to Department of Child & Family Services. In accordance with Louisiana Children's Code 610 B.

B. The ministerial staff person in charge should suspend the accused person from performing all duties involving individuals or groups these policies endeavor to protect, until an official investigation has been completed. In addition if the accused perpetrator is a staff member, paid worker, or volunteer of the church, the following procedures will be followed.

a. Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.

b. The pastor, or his agent, or the church's designated authority (team or committee), under directives determined by the church's legal counsel, will inform the victim and victim's family of the steps that are being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigation.

c. If an incident of abuse is confirmed, the church will immediately dismiss the suspected worker from his/her position. Termination will be considered appropriate under these circumstances.

d. In instances where evidence is inconclusive, the church will take action with advice from legal counsel in consultation with law enforcement officials, depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim and the victim's family's requests.

e. The pastor, in consultation with legal counsel, will determine the amount of information he believes is appropriate to relate to the congregation. Usually commenting in detail on an ongoing investigation is not wise.

III. Confidentiality

All reports of abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No church employee shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by an employee of the church shall be cause for immediate dismissal. The pastor and/or legal counsel, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation may authorize limited additional

disclosure if necessary to protect other children from harm, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified. But in no case shall the identity of the victim be disclosed except as required by law.

IV. Investigation of Alleged Abuse or Neglect

No person shall attempt to conduct an investigation through examination or interrogation of the individuals or groups this policy seeks to protect, or the accused person, or a witness. It is acceptable to obtain a reasonable amount of information if abuse of a child is suspected or occurred. However, detailed interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the church in an official capacity. All workers of the church shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.

V. Preservation of Records

The Church Administrator will be responsible to ensure that all allegations of abuse are thoroughly documented. Copies of all documents relating to an event of abuse or neglect, including a list of all persons known to be present, shall be retained until advised that all criminal and civil investigations and actions have been completed, and the prescriptive period of any such actions has expired.

VI. Ministerial Care

The ministerial staff person shall encourage and assist abused or neglected individuals this policy seeks to protect, including the parents of abused children to secure appropriate counseling, care and support. In the event the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the church, the staff shall encourage and assist the individual in securing appropriate pastoral care and support, including third party counseling, being mindful of the potential for a conflict of interest. All persons shall act towards the abused individual and their parents or guardians, and the accused, in accordance with the principles of Christianity at all times.

VII. Liaison with the Community

The pastor, or his appointed agent, or the church's designated authority (team or committee), or the church's legal counsel, will serve as the church's sole access to the media. The church should emphasize to the public its position on child abuse, its concern for the victim and the extensive steps being taken to address the safety of all who attend the church.

Part 2: Adult Protection

ADULT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

PURPOSE: To establish proper preventative measures to protect individuals against sexual misconduct as well as to specify courses of action in the case of allegations or an actual incident regarding sexual misconduct.

GUIDELINES FOR SEXUAL MISCONDUCT:

First Baptist Church Zachary is committed to providing a work and ministry environment in keeping with Christian principles and free from sexual misconduct. First Baptist Church Zachary has a zero tolerance policy in regards to sexual misconduct. This policy prohibits sexual misconduct by any person attending an event on the campus of First Baptist Church Zachary or any other church sanctioned event.

Prohibited sexual misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following behavior, whether in person, written, by telephone, or electronic device:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, invitations or comments;
- Visual conduct such as derogatory and/or sexually-oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures;
- Physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movement or interfering with work;
- Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests;

First Baptist Church Zachary is committed to taking seriously any allegations of sexual misconduct, and to that end will train those charged with receiving reports or complaints and investigating and reporting such. Those trained will be aware of the church's policies in this regard, will take concerns seriously, will respect confidentiality, and will not prejudge any claim. As in all the church's relationships, First Baptist Church Zachary will seek to respect all persons, to be just in all the church's dealings, and where there is failure and sin to invite not only confession but true repentance, renewal and restoration in Christ.

THE REPORTING PROCESS:

Any person who believes he or she has been subjected to sexual misconduct by another individual at First Baptist Church Zachary or any church sanctioned event, or has witnessed any sexual misconduct against another, should report the facts of the incident or incidents and the names of the individuals involved to any ministerial staff person. If the reporting individual believes a crime has been committed, he or she is encouraged to contact law enforcement authorities.

The complaint must specify the name(s) of the individuals involved (including any witnesses) and a description of the specific conduct complained of. The church under the direction of the Senior Pastor or other church staff, in consultation with legal counsel, will immediately undertake an effective, thorough, and objective investigation and attempt to resolve the situation. In the event the accused perpetrator is an employee of the church, the chairperson of the personnel committee will participate in the investigation. If the church determines that sexual

misconduct has occurred, effective remedial action will be taken commensurate with the severity of the offense. Appropriate action will also be taken to deter any future sexual misconduct. The church will not retaliate against any one for filing a complaint and will not knowingly permit retaliation by any other volunteer or called staff of First Baptist Church Zachary. All information in regards to reports and investigations will be kept confidential. First Baptist Church Zachary reserves the right to place any employee or volunteer on leave from their position, until a proper investigation is duly completed.

First Baptist Church Zachary encourages anyone to report any incidents of sexual misconduct forbidden by this policy so that reports can be resolved fairly.

At all times, throughout this reporting and investigation process, the church is committed to following Biblical principles and encouraging all persons to follow Biblical principles including those found in Matthew 18:15-20.

Criminal Action

Any person who believes he or she has been or is being subjected to sexual misconduct has the right to decide how to deal with such misconduct. If the initial report alleges investigation suggests criminal activity, the reporting person will be encouraged to contact the proper authorities in that jurisdiction and First Baptist Church Zachary will cooperate with law enforcement.

Retaliation Prohibited

First Baptist Church Zachary prohibits retaliation against anyone, including an employee, volunteer, student or individual, who in good faith reports prohibited conduct. Retaliation against a participant in the investigation is also prohibited.

SECTION 4: Forms

Form #1:	Vorker Applicatio	n			
This application is to be completed by all worker applicants.					
Date:					
Full Name:					
Address					
Home Phone Ce	Il Phone	Business Phone			
Driver's License No	State	Expiration Date			
Date of Birth					
Position applying for					
Position category (check one): () Primary position () Secondary position					
Date you would be available Days of the week available					
When did you make your profession of faith in Christ?					
Are you a member of this church? Yes No					
Please list the names and locations of other churches that you have attended regularly within the last 10 years.					
Please list the names and email addresses of two members of First Baptist Church Zachary who can provide a personal reference:					
1)					
2)					
List below two people who have kno reference: Name Email Address	Name				
Phone #	Phone #				
1. Have you ever been known by another name?					
Yes No if yes, please explain:					

Page 2 of 2

2. During your lifetime, have you ever been arrested for molesting or abusing another person, accused of physical assault, or a sexual offense of any nature?

Yes	No	if yes	, please	explain:
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3. Have you ever been prosecuted, pled guilty or no contest for any sexual offense and/or child abuse or molestation?

Yes ____ No ____ if yes, please explain: _____

4. Are you willing to be photographed for confidential church personnel records?

Yes ____ No ____

5. Are you willing to wear a photo identification name-tag whenever you are supervising children? Yes _____ No _____

Applicant Statement

I hereby certify that I have read and completed the above application. My answers are true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I submit and give permission for the church to maintain my photograph on file. I also agree to allow the church to conduct criminal court background checks on me now and at regular intervals. If allowed to work with children, or adults with judgmental limitations, I agree to observe and be bound by the bylaws and policies of First Baptist Church Zachary.

I hereby authorize all persons, schools, organizations and law enforcement agencies to supply First Baptist Church Zachary with any information concerning my character or background in connection with working with children, or adults with judgmental limitations, and I hereby release them from liability or damages which may occur as a result of their response to this request.

I authorize First Baptist Church Zachary to supply my service record, in whole or part, to any prospective or future organization or agency with a legal and proper interest in them. I understand that if allowed to serve, that any misrepresentation made by me in this application shall be considered sufficient cause for my dismissal without advance notice. I have been apprised of and support the church's position regarding the problem of abuse and neglect.

I acknowledge below by my signature that I have been given a copy of both the SUMMARY OF LOUISIANA CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT REPORTING LAW (L.S.A-R.S. 14:403; LA 601-616) and the *Neglect and Abuse Prevention Policy* of First Baptist Church Zachary. I have read and understand both documents. I understand that my service as an employee or volunteer worker of First Baptist Church Zachary who works with those the church's policy seeks to protect is dependent on my strict adherence to these policies.

Signature:

Date:_____

Form #2:

SUMMARY OF LOUISIANA CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT REPORTING LAW L.S.A-R.S. 14:403; LA. CHILDREN'S CODE ARTS. 601-616)

Criminal statute L.S.A.-R.S.14:403 specifies that any person in the Children's Code who is required to report abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse of a child under age l8, is to report information to authorities when that person has cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare is endangered. Willful and knowing failure to report can result in a \$500.00 fine or imprisonment for six (6) months, or both.

LA Children's Code Art. 603 defines those persons who must report child abuse as mandatory reporters, which include: any person who provides health care services, e.g., doctors, nurses, technicians; mental health or social services professionals who provide counseling services to a child or his/her family; members of the clergy; teaching or child care providers; law enforcement officers and commercial film processors.

Art. 603 (13) (c) provides an exception to the mandatory reporting requirement for a "member of the clergy." He is not required to report a confidential communication, i.e., "one made privately and not intended for further disclosure except to the persons present in furtherance of the communication from a person." If the member of the clergy, in the course of the discipline or practice of that church, denomination, or organization, is authorized or accustomed to hearing confidential communications, and under the discipline or tenets of the church, denomination, or organization has a duty to keep such communications confidential. In that instance, the member of the clergy shall encourage that person to report the allegations to the appropriate authorities.

Art. 610 is the reporting procedure that requires mandatory reporters to immediately report to local child protection unit of Department of Social Services in cases where the abuser is believed to be a parent, caretaker, a person who maintains an interpersonal dating or engagement relationship with the parent or caretaker, or a person living in the same residence with the parent or caretaker as spouse whether married or not. If such a person or caretaker is not believed to have any responsibility for the abuse or neglect, the report should be immediately made to the appropriate local or state law enforcement agency. Dual reporting shall be permitted.

The initial report may be verbal, and should contain the following information, if known:

(1) Name, address, age, sex and race of the child;

(2) Nature, extent and cause of child's injuries or endangered condition, including any previous known or suspected abuse to the child or child's siblings;

- (3) Name and address of parent(s) or caretaker;
- (4) Names and ages of all other members of child's household;
- (5) Name and address of the reporter;
- (6) Account of how child came to reporter's attention;
- (7) Explanation of cause of child's injury or condition offered by child, the caretaker

Form 3: Neglect, Abuse, and Misconduct Reporting Form

Name(s) of person(s) making report:		
Phone:	Email:	
Adress:		
_		
Name of alleged victim (if different from above	e):	
Age: Gender Race: Name o Caretaker:	f Parent(s) or	
Names and ages of all other members of chil	d's household:	
Date and time of incident:	Location of incident:	
Name of alleged perpetrator:		
(May be written or typed on separate page, b	ding injuries, names of any potential witnesses: ut must be signed, dated and attached to this form)	
Signature of Reporter:	Date:	
Signature of Reporter:	Date:	
Signature of Ministerial Staff receiving Report	: Date:	
Signature of Ministerial Staff receiving Report	: Date:	