**Rationale for our Safe Practices Policy**

Seeking to honor God’s call to live in a faith community together, we understand the importance of creating clear boundaries and healthy relationships in order to ensure that all people in the church feel safe, protected, and supported. This is important especially when pertaining to groups of people who are most vulnerable as well as volunteers who care for them. Guided by the Spirit to 1 John 1:7, “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus God’s Son cleanses us from all sin,” we create this policy of trust and accountability with the aim of striving to walk in the Light of Jesus Christ together.

Relying on God to help us revere this covenant, we proclaim: “Unless it is the Lord who builds the house, the builders’ work is useless. Unless it is the Lord who protects the city, the guard on duty is useless…No doubt about it: children are a gift from the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a divine reward” (Psalm 127:1, 3). Though we put these boundaries in place, we maintain our faithful commitment to God as the foundation for our work in the church and seek the Spirit’s counsel to empower us in our goal of cherishing God’s gift of children. As Jesus Christ’s disciples, we remember well his teaching from Mark 9:36-7: “He took a little child whom He placed among them. Taking the child in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My name welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me does not welcome Me, but The One who sent Me.” Welcoming children into the life of this church, we welcome also the LORD who sent them, accepting the sacred responsibility accompanying it.

Hoping that as individuals we will be sheltered from harm, we acknowledge it is more important to assure security and sanctuary for the entire community and commit ourselves to the words of Philippians 2:4: “Looking out not for our own interests, but taking an interest in others as well.” We understand this is the means by which we bond together in the trusting love of Romans 12:9-10: “Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good. Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other.”

Practicing the sanctity of safety, we are freed from worry as Proverbs 12:25 explains, “Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up.” So we undertake this training, receive these practices, and are encouraged it is a manifestation of God’s shield surrounding us and those whom we seek to safeguard.

Believing it is possible to “grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, [and] make the body grow so that it builds itself up in love,” we adopt this policy. With love we created these practices and with love we commend them to the people of this church so that in love we may all grow more fully into Christ Jesus as a unified body of faith.

With joy and thanksgiving you are invited to commit to this covenant of Safe Practices and feel protected as you equally pledge to protect others.

*Approved by Session on May 25, 2014*