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Child Protection Policy

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BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward." (Matthew 10:40-42)

In just a few short biblical sentences of power and compassion, we are challenged to think more deeply about what is meant by welcoming one another. It is only after doing so that we discover the reward that comes from the deep hospitality found in God's welcome of us. Compassionate welcome, or hospitality, is a form of service to Christ. A service we seek to live out at Camp Hanover.

Compassionate welcome means approaching each other through God. This is how we recognize that genuine human relationships emerge from putting the grace-filled hospitality of God's love at the center of our lives and at the center of all our relationships. It is out of this understanding of God's hospitality enacted in the world that we welcome all whom God welcomes in the name of Jesus Christ. In this spirit of hospitality, we seek to provide a safe and welcoming space where those in are charge can experience the love of God. As we do so, our own journeys of discipleship are enriched, and our camp community is made better for all who are welcome in it.

COVENANT STATEMENT

The Camp Hanover Ministries Board Members and staff believe that we are called by God to be the body of Christ in our community and that involved in this calling is the responsibility to create and maintain safe and supportive environments for all children, youth, and at-risk adults in our care. Creating and being faithful to thoughtful guidelines for protection of children, youth, and at-risk adults is part of our promise of support and nurture of all God's people. In the midst of efforts to provide such protection, we acknowledge that we are all dependent upon God's grace and mercy and are not called to condemn but to treat all persons, including those who may have caused harm to others, with compassion, respect, and fairness. We, the Board members and staff of Camp Hanover, therefore, commit ourselves and our actions to the safety, welfare, and protection of all children, youth, and at-risk adults participating in the activities and programs of this camp.

POLICIES

All Camp Hanover (hereinafter "camp") activities and programs involving children, youth, and at-risk adults will be subject to the following policies. These policies address the preventable risk of any form of abuse or harassment, whether physical, mental or sexual, by any of the staff or volunteers of this camp while on camp property or while engaged in off-site camp activities or programs. As used herein the term "child," "children," and "youth" refer to all persons under 18 years of age and the term "at-risk adult" refers to all persons 18 and older who are particularly vulnerable. Our policies include: Statement on Inclusivity, the Child, Youth and At-Risk Adult Protection Policy, and the Transgender Protection Policy.

LEADERSHIP SELECTION AND TRAINING

1. Selection and Screening of Staff

Camp Hanover seeks highly qualified people to work on our staff. Often, these are former campers we have had the chance to get to know over several summers. Other times people are recommended by staff and/or other people familiar with our program and what it takes to succeed here.

Regardless of how people come to apply to be part of the Camp Hanover staff, all applicants, paid and volunteer, must submit a written application, undergo a criminal background check, and have their name run through the National Sex Offender Database. Persons applying to be staff members also have an interview. In addition, first year staff must submit three written references (as needed for successive years). All of these steps are completed prior to staff working with children, youth, or at-risk adults.

2. Training

Once hired, all staff participate in staff orientation, a significant portion of which is designed to inform them of their role in the care of the children who attend Camp Hanover. One session during orientation helps familiarize staff with the signs of abuse and what to do if they suspect a child is a victim of abuse.

Another session is devoted to appropriate interactions with campers, so all staff are familiar with what is, and is not, acceptable.

Yet another session deals with ways to handle sensitive topics with campers, so that we are speaking in age appropriate terms with children on issues that may arise during a camp session. The goal here, as always, is to keep children safe and make them comfortable.

3. Prevention

Camp Hanover takes several steps to minimize opportunity for abuse to happen:

Rule of Three – This says staff are not to be alone with children. If a staff member needs to take a child somewhere, they are required to take a “buddy” with them. If another staff member is not present, and a staff member needs to address a camper, they can pull the child off to the side, in view of the rest of the group to address the situation/concern.

Supervision – Our program and schedule are set up to ensure that campers are always supervised, therefore helping to provide a safe environment and reducing opportunities for camper to camper abuse. Staff will not supervise campers who are less than two years younger than the staff person. In addition,

staff are to follow the Rule of Three (see above) and never be alone with a camper.

The following acts are prohibited by this policy:

- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a child, youth, or at-risk adult;
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child, youth, or at-risk adult;
- Physically abusive behavior to a child, youth, or at-risk adult;
- Physical neglect of a child, children, youth, or at-risk adult including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of the church;
- Intentional actions causing mental or emotional injury to a child, children, youth, or at-risk adult;
- Possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of the church;
- Possession of, advocacy of the use of, or being under the influence of any illegal drugs;
- Consumption of, or being under the influence of, alcohol while leading or participating in a children's
- or youth function or while engaging in ministry with at-risk adults at the church.

We recognize there are many particular populations of campers who have other unique needs: campers who have mental or physical challenges, campers who identify as LGBTQIA++, and those who experience a spectrum disorder. We assess their particular needs on a case by case basis, recognizing that all our policies will be abided by for all campers. However, our campers who identify as transgender face some potential logistical challenges, which we address in our Transgender Camper Policy (see Appendix A).

4. Reporting

All staff at Camp Hanover are considered mandatory reporters, as outlined by the Commonwealth of Virginia in "A Guide For Mandated Reporters In Recognizing And Reporting Child Abuse And Neglect." As part of the training for all staff, we cover what this means, and how to handle a situation if they suspect a child to be a victim of abuse, or if another staff member has committed abuse. Failure to timely report an incident to the designated person shall be considered a procedural violation of this Policy and could be grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee and suspension and dismissal from participation in all camp activities and programs.

VIOLATION REPORTING POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for all children and program participants, the staff, employees, and volunteers of Camp Hanover must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation thought to be in violation of this Policy. All questions or concerns of any suspected abusive behavior or harassment shall be directed to the Executive Director or Program Director, or in extenuating circumstances, the General Presbyter of the Presbytery of the James. Anyone who witnesses an occurrence in violation of this Policy should take the following steps to insure the security of the child or program participant, and to protect against physical, emotional or psychological injury, to all persons involved.

- Personally secure the safety of the child or program participant.
- Report the incident as soon as possible.
- Complete a written incident report form.
- Remain with the child or program participant or make sure they are with another adult.
- Do not personally confront the alleged or accused violator of the policy.
- Allow the designated person to provide you with instructions for reporting of the incident.
- The executive director or the designated person will be solely responsible for all communications on behalf of the camp.

In the event a child or program participant reports abusive conduct while engaged in a camp-sponsored activity or involving the staff, employees, or volunteers of Camp Hanover, regardless of where the conduct occurred, the person initially contacted by the child, youth, or at-risk adult should contact the designated person (Executive Director, Program Director, appropriate program staff, or General Presbyter). Then that person must complete a written Incident Report recording verbatim the specific words first spoken by the child, or program participant and the conduct and demeanor observed concerning the incident.

5. Consequences of Violation

Any person accused of violating this policy, whether a staff member, employee, or volunteer, will immediately be suspended from participation in all camp activities and programs. Such suspension shall continue during any investigation by the camp or law enforcement or child protection agencies. Any person found to have committed a Prohibited Act shall be prohibited from future participation in all camp and youth activities and programs. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment.

Restrictions of participation may be removed if the accused person is found not to have committed a Prohibited Act.

Addendum: Transgender Camper Policy - DRAFT

The bulleted list below represents camp's policy regarding transgender guests, campers and staff.

- The parent or guardian determines the gender of any child and in the case of camper facilitated programs, submits this during the registration process. Adults determine their own gender.
- Guests/Staff/Campers use the bathroom that corresponds with their expressed gender. Any guest/staff/camper who has a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, should be provided access to a single user restroom. However, no guest/staff/camper shall be required to use such a restroom because they are transgender or gender nonconforming. If another camper and/or a parent of another camper, express discomfort with sharing space with an LGBTQ+ youth, that child/person can use a separate, private space.
- At camp, campers typically sleep in lodging areas according to their gender. Note: There is not a "one-size-fits-all" housing policy for transgender or gender non-conforming youth. It is vitally important to openly communicate with the youth about their needs and desires in order to create the best solution. Some transgender youth may feel more comfortable housing with the gender that correlates with their full time presentation and identity, others with their biological sex. Again, it is important to work with the youth to create a reasonable accommodation that best suits everyone.
- Camp encourages all guests/campers/staff to change clothes in private areas and discourages nudity or disrobing directly in front of others.
- All our showers are single occupancy and each has a private undressing/dressing area where guests/staff/campers can have privacy while changing and showering. Our swimwear policy allows campers to be comfortable, while covering private areas. Campers may wear clothing over the top of their swimsuit if they choose.
- Campers are always supervised while at camp, so there are not any apparent safety concerns or legal issues related to children of opposite sex sleeping in the same room
- Camp fills staff vacancies and assigns staff lodging/responsibilities based on summer staff applicants self-selected gender.
- When referring to a camper/guest/staff member, staff and campers should use preferred pronouns when not using the person's name.
- It is not required that a parent/guardian inform camp staff that their child is transgender. However, camp prefers that parents, if comfortable, indicate that their camper is transgender when they register for camp. Being made aware of a

transgender camper will allow our staff to be prepared so we can put forth our best effort to aid the child have a positive experience at camp.

- Staff will not discuss the gender of a camper in any situation where it is not pertinent or appropriate to do so. (Calling attention to something that is particularly EXCLUSIVE is not in keeping with the INCLUSIVE nature of the camp environment we create.) Only the staff noted below will be made aware a particular camper is transgender and this information will remain confidential, as would specific medical information for any camper. Directors and nurses will be notified of any camper that identifies as transgender. Other staff that relate directly to the camper will also be notified (the child's counselors and the Unit Coordinator for the group).
- Staff training will include a session regarding inclusion of LGBTQ+ campers. This policy will be discussed, along with rationale and training for providing transgender campers (and every camper) with an emotionally and physically safe environment.