

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The children in our congregations are our most precious resource. The future hope of the church rests upon their development and potential. Physical and sexual abuse endanger the future and shatter the innocence and purity of childhood.

The worst nightmare a church can experience is a case or allegation of sexual misconduct involving a child. Not only does the victim suffer emotionally, but just one incident of sexual misconduct can destroy the trust, credibility and reputation of a church for years. And, the legal costs of a lawsuit can financially ruin an organization.

Upper Ohio Valley Presbytery made a commitment to confront this social problem and to reduce the risk of child abuse in our congregations by requiring a criminal background check of all Ministers of Word and Sacrament and all Commissioned and Authorized Lay Pastors.

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Important Federal Court Ruling on Failure to Report Child Abuse

A federal court in Pennsylvania ruled that a local church and denominational agency could be sued on the basis of the legal principle of *negligence per se* by a victim of child abuse as a result of their failure to report. This means that a mandatory child abuse reporter's failure to comply with a state child abuse reporting law's requirement to report a known or reasonably suspected incident of child abuse would render that person automatically liable for monetary damages without a need for the victim to prove actual negligence. [Doe v. Liberatore, 478 F.Supp.2d 742 (M.D. pa 2007)]