

Adopted by Session Upon Motion, Second and Vote of August 22, 2018

Tabernacle Presbyterian Church (Tab) Policy and Procedures
Regarding Sex Offenders or Other Potentially
Threatening People (herein the “Person”) Participating
in Tab Ministries

Policy

Tab’s 2016 Vision Renewal Statement includes the following commitment regarding reconciliation and the life of the Church:

A DESIRE FOR RECONCILIATION

Tab is a congregation focused on reconciliation, or right relationship, with God and with each other. Through His life, Christ demonstrated the love we are to show the world. Through His death on the cross, He made it possible for us to have the right relationships we seek. Through His resurrection, He removed the barriers that block those relationships. In short, as described in Ephesians 2, Jesus died so that we could have peace with God and with each other.

We recognize this reconciliation is not an event, but rather an ongoing process calling us to deeper spirituality, deeper commitments to each other and more purposeful ministry with the people around us. We also recognize the world resists this reconciliation through a culture that grows increasingly polarized and isolating; through enduring needs too often met with short-term fixes; and through tangible poverties that block the path to spiritual riches.

To address these challenges, Tab seeks to provide a path toward deeper personal Christian faith and a means for serving the greater community in ways that unite rather than divide. We seek to provide immediate help as well as a way for people to build lives of dignity. We seek to address urgent needs while still emphasizing God’s message in a way that changes lives forever.

Reconciliation and right relationships are critical elements of Biblical faith and practice. This Policy addresses but one factor among many in Tab’s responsibility to be, to the extent possible, an agent of reconciliation among and between all who minister or are ministered to under the auspices and authority of Tabernacle Presbyterian Church.

Session Responsibility

As the Session is the governing body and authority for almost all matters pertaining to Tab, including determining qualifications for membership; use and maintenance of Tab property; collection, budgeting and expenditure of Tab funds; and creation and staffing of ministries, it shall be the responsibility of the Session to determine the extent to and conditions under which a “Person” shall be permitted to participate in worship and other ministries and gatherings in the life of the church.

Process

When it comes to the attention of anyone associated with Tab that a “Person” is participating in Tab ministries, attending worship, is on Tab premises or seeks any of the preceding, one of the pastors should be notified as soon as possible. If no pastor is immediately available, the ministry leader or an elder should be notified who will in turn relay the information to the pastors. As is described in #5 below, some situations may call for immediate action and others may allow the pastors and session more time to respond.

When it comes to the attention of the Session that a “Person” is participating in Tab ministries, attending worship, is on Tab premises or seeks any of the preceding, the Session shall cause an examination of the circumstances pertaining to the “Person” to be conducted. The Session may use a task force, a committee, pastors, members, non-members, law enforcement, or outside professionals to assist in the examination.

In determining the extent to and conditions under which a “Person” may participate in Tab ministries, the Session shall consider and weigh any relevant factors including but not limited to:

1. The underlying nature of the crime(s) or condition(s) that makes the “Person” a potential threat.
2. Familiarity of Tab leadership with the “Person”.
3. The remoteness or proximity in time of the crime(s) or condition(s).
4. Aggravating factors such as recurrence or other threatening behavior.
5. Potential impact on Tab or individual members.
6. Mitigating factors such as public service, evidence of a changed lifestyle and spiritual growth.
7. If available, recommendations of others including but not limited to parole officers, law enforcement, character witnesses, victims or family members of victims.
8. The attitude of the “Person” including the degree of contrition or remorse.

9. The degree to which the “Person” accepts the authority of Session and cooperates with the Session.
10. Any legal or court imposed conditions or restrictions on the “Person”.

Conditions and Authority of the Session/Pastors

Recognizing that every circumstance is different, the Session has a great deal of latitude and can craft any conditions or set of conditions it deems appropriate. The following is not an exclusive list and actions may be used alone or in combination:

1. Exclude the “Person” from participation in Tab ministries and Tab property for a determined period of time.
2. Exclude the “Person” from participation in Tab ministries and Tab property until certain conditions are met.
3. Limited participation and access. (Dates and times, events, physical areas, ministries, time duration, etc.)
4. Assign a “Sponsor” to supervise, escort or monitor and serve as a point of contact for the church and the “Person”.
5. It may be the case that a pastor or their designee, for legal compliance, safety or other reasons is required to take immediate action prior to notifying Session. These actions could include but are limited to: calling the police, calling the Department of Child Services, notifying family members or insisting a Person leave the premises. The pastor should take those actions as needed in their discretion and inform the Session or chair of the Human Resources Committee as soon as practicable.
- 6. Disclosure and Records.** As every case is factually different, record keeping and communication with relevant parties and the congregation will vary accordingly. In each situation, the Session should decide what actions are appropriate. In the interest of protecting and valuing individual reputations (of families, potential Persons and potential injured parties) and protection against defamation claims, all records and information about an incident will be confidential, available only on a “need to know” basis, and shall not be communicated (other than as required by law) to any other person or entity without formal Session approval.