

The Presbytery Of San José

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August 21, 2009

To: **Clerks of Session**

From: **Jane Odell**, Coordinator for Safe Church Practices

Re: **Required fingerprinting and background checks**

Following a child molestation incident in one of our churches in 2006 an administrative commission was appointed by the presbytery. Five recommendations were made in the commission's report to the Presbytery. Recommendation #4 and the process approved by the Presbytery Council for implementing the recommendation reads as follows....

Recommendation #4: That all of our churches require background checks for all teachers, youth sponsors, and all other adults who are serving or who wish to serve in church ministries with minor children and youth and that this requirement be included in the text of the presbytery's policy statement.

Process:

1. That the COM will recommend a modification to Presbytery Policy 20A that incorporates a required background check and fingerprinting for all employment and volunteer positions within any church or presbytery entity which ministers to or serves minor children and youth.
2. Said policy revision to be presented to the Presbytery for reading and approval at its Sept. and Nov. meetings, 2009, if possible.
3. Churches are urged to begin background checks and fingerprinting as soon as possible during the 2009 calendar year.
4. Presbytery will provide background check sources for church use, and financial resources to those churches where background check and fingerprinting costs are prohibitive.

I have enclosed a sheet which gives phone numbers for reporting child/elder abuse and/or neglect for the 4 counties of the Presbytery of San Jose. The numbers for the Sheriff's Departments may be used to arrange for fingerprinting. In Santa Clara County you may also use Security Code 3, Inc. located at 1735 N. First St., Suite 104, San Jose. Their phone # is 408-978-9111. They have a mobile unit.

Our new insurance company United Church of Christ Insurance Board provides very low cost background checks. Contact Carmen Siegal or Melissa Donahue at 866-644-2747 for complete information.

I will be contacting you later regarding dates and location for training in mandatory reporting of child/elder abuse and/or neglect.

Please call me if you have questions.

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