

POLICY FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Preamble:

Christ Church Lutheran takes our responsibility to care for children¹, youth and vulnerable populations very seriously. This Policy and associated guidelines and procedures set forth herein are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment for children and vulnerable populations at our church.

This Policy provides a general overview of procedures and guidelines for Christ Church Lutheran pastors, clergy, employees and Regular Volunteers². This Policy is intended to create a safe environment for children, youth and vulnerable populations. This Policy and its procedures have been adopted by the Church Council and will be strictly enforced.

Because we love children and desire to protect them, Christ Church Lutheran requires all pastors, clergy, employees and Regular Volunteers working with children, youth, students or other vulnerable populations to (1) take regular **Sexual Abuse Awareness Training** as described herein; (2) successfully pass **Background Screening and Criminal Background Checks** as described herein as a pre-condition to working with children, youth and vulnerable populations; and (3) **read and acknowledge reading this Policy** On Protecting Children and Vulnerable Populations at Christ Church Lutheran.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

Christ Church Lutheran policy requires that its pastors, clergy, employees and all volunteers (both regular and occasional) avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Pastors, clergy, employees, staff members and Regular Volunteers are “Mandated Reporters” as defined by law and are therefore required to report any policy violations both to the Senior Pastor and Assistant Pastor(s), and also to child protection services and law enforcement agencies as described herein. Additionally, when any Pastor receives notice of a policy violation, the Pastor shall discuss the matter with the other Pastor(s). Pastors are to consult with one another and may also consult with the Church Council President and the Church Council, as required. It is Christ

¹ A Child is defined by law as a person under 18 years of age. (As such, “children” includes “youth” herein).

² A “Regular Volunteer” is defined by law as a volunteer who is 18 years of age or older and who has direct contact with, or supervision of, children for more than 16 hours per month or 32 hours per year.

Church Lutheran Policy that any incident or policy violation shall be reported to more than one person (for example, two Pastors shall have knowledge and will consult with one another).

Pastors, clergy, employees and Regular Volunteers are to have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip our pastors, clergy, employees and Regular Volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Christ Church Lutheran requires all pastors, clergy, employees and Regular Volunteers to complete:

Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training (California Department of Social Services):

Found at: [Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training \(mandatedreporter.ca.com\)](http://mandatedreporter.ca.com)

Pastors and Clergy must complete both: (1) General Training: 4 Hours, and (2) Clergy Training: 2 additional hours.

Other employees must complete: General Training: 4 Hours

Regular Volunteers must complete: Volunteer Training: 2 hours.

Any individual receiving this training must present their **Certificates Of Completion** to the Senior Pastor or Church Council President. Christ Church Lutheran will keep and safeguard these records.

Every Individual receiving training must renew their training **every two years** (and present their new Certificates Of Completion to the Senior Pastor or Church Council President).

Successfully completing the above training is a pre-condition to working with children, youth and vulnerable populations at Christ Church Lutheran.

This Policy and procedures will be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary by the Church Council to correspond to changes in California law and the church community.

STEP TWO: Background Screening and Criminal Background Checks

Christ Church Lutheran requires that all pastors, clergy, employees and Regular Volunteers working or volunteering in children's or youth activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve in any area providing services to children or minors. In addition, certain other past criminal acts may preclude an applicant from serving minors.

In furtherance of this policy, pastors, clergy, employees and Regular Volunteers consent to:

1. A **national** criminal background check being run on all pastors, clergy and employees, both existing and new.

2. A **statewide** criminal or **statewide** sexual offender background check being run on any and all Regular Volunteers, *both existing and new*, including any Regular Volunteer who is involved in a Nursery, a School, overnight activity with minors, counseling of minors, or one on-one mentorship of minors.

3. All persons on whom a background check is run hereby consent to the San Francisco Police Department and/or the Department of Justice of the State of California and/or other law enforcement agencies releasing to Christ Church Lutheran any information which pertains to any record of convictions contained in its files or in any criminal file maintained on such person whether local, state, or national. In addition, such persons **release and agree to hold harmless** Christ Church Lutheran, its officers, employees, and volunteers, from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

4. A **face-to-face interview** shall be conducted for any person applying to work or volunteer in children, youth or vulnerable population activities pursuant to this Policy. Persons applying to work or volunteer in children, youth or vulnerable population's activities must submit the **names of two references** who will be contacted.

5. Persons applying to work or volunteer in children's or youth or vulnerable population activities will be asked at a minimum the following **questions**:

(a) Have you ever been charged with or convicted of sexual misconduct or abuse, or been the subject of a complaint to any employer, government, or other agency, organization, or person, charging sexual abuse, misconduct, or harassment?

(b) Have you ever been charged or convicted of any crime other than a minor traffic violation?

(c) Studies have shown that individuals who abuse children have often been abused themselves as children. If you were abused as a child, or have ever been an abuser or the partner of an abuser, or have been involved in any way in an abusive situation, and are concerned that these experiences might impact your care of children, please share this with the

program director or one of the pastors. Our pastors will help you or will refer you to professional help in the community.

(d) Please provide the names, addresses, and phone numbers of two contacts (preferably agencies or organizations) which are acquainted with your work with children.

STEP THREE: Read And Acknowledge These Policies & Procedures

Current and future pastors, clergy, employees, staff members and Regular Volunteers working or volunteering in children, youth or vulnerable population's activities are required to review the policies contained in this document and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with the policy requirements.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

ABUSE TOLERANCE

Christ Church Lutheran has a **zero tolerance for sexual, physical, emotional and mental abuse** in Christ Church Lutheran sponsored or related activities. It is the responsibility of every pastor, clergy member, employee and volunteer (both Regular and Occasional) to act in the best interest of all children in every program and activity.

In the event that any pastor, clergy member, employee or Regular Volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to **immediately report** their observations to the Senior Pastor or to the Church Council President.

It is a violation of California law for any pastor, clergy member, employee or volunteer (either Regular or Occasional) to physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect any child or member of a vulnerable population group participating in Christ Church Lutheran programs or activities.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Christ Church Lutheran is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children, youth and vulnerable populations and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and **will be reported**, in accordance with this Policy and with state law, to The California Department Of Social Services, the San Francisco Police Department, and/or other appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers ‘groom’ children for abuse, it is possible that a pastor, clergy member, employee, staff member or Regular Volunteer may witness behavior intended to ‘groom’ a child for sexual abuse. Such persons are asked to report ‘grooming’ behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to the Senior Pastor or to the Church Council President.

Failure to report sexual, physical, emotional and mental abuse is a violation of this Policy.

For legally mandated reporters (i.e.: pastors, clergy members, employees and Regular Volunteers), failure to report sexual, physical, emotional and mental abuse is also a violation of California law.

Any Regular Volunteer who fails to report sexual, physical, emotional or mental abuse may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children, youth or vulnerable group members at Christ Church Lutheran.

Any pastor, clergy, or employees who fail to report sexual, physical, emotional or mental abuse may be grounds for termination of such person. Any pastor or clergy receiving confidential information from any person must always put the protection and best interests of children, youth and vulnerable persons first.

Anyone who knows or suspects that a pastor, clergy member or rostered person may have been involved in sexual misconduct, abuse or neglect must also report that knowledge or suspicion to Church Council who will in turn report such information to the Bishop or designated assistant to the Bishop.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Violations of these policies by any of our pastors, clergy, employees or Regular Volunteers are grounds for immediate dismissal and/or disciplinary action. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Church Council.

Any person found to have violated these policies may be prohibited from *future* participation in all activities and programming involving minors and vulnerable populations. If the person is an employee, such conduct may result in termination of employment.

Any person accused of committing any act considered by the Senior Pastor or the Church Council to be harmful to a child, student or vulnerable population member will be immediately suspended from participation in such activities. This **suspension will continue during any investigation** by law enforcement, Child Protective agencies or by the Church.

REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

Christ Church Lutheran promptly reports **all suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children or members of vulnerable populations to The California Department Of Social Services at:**

The Office of Child Abuse Prevention
744 P Street, MS 8-11-82
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 651-6960

Additionally, Christ Church Lutheran may report the suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children or members of vulnerable populations to San Francisco **Child Protective Services** 24hr number at:

(800)-856-5553

Additionally, in the event of suspected or alleged abuse of adults over 60 or dependent adults aged 18-59, reporting is to be made to the California Adult Protective Services Department's 24 hour number at:

1-833-401-0832

Finally, Christ Church Lutheran may also report the suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children or members of vulnerable populations directly to The San Francisco Police Department.

When in doubt, report.

It is to be understood that any person witnessing suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children or members of vulnerable populations at Christ Church Lutheran or at Christ Church Lutheran activities **does not require the permission or authorization** of Christ Church Lutheran's Pastors, President or Church Council to report such suspected or alleged abuse or neglect to the authorities mentioned above. In short, NO PERMISSION IS NEEDED from Christ Church Lutheran before reporting to law enforcement personnel or to the Child Abuse Hotline. In addition, a report may be made without involving or informing Christ Church Lutheran personnel. However, it is also to be understood that Christ Church Lutheran's Pastors, President and Church Council are all committed to working together with and supporting any person making such reports to the above authorities, especially if such person may not feel able or willing to report alone.

SAFETY AND SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

No child, youth or vulnerable population member will ever be left unattended in a church area during regular programming, class or activity. All children, youth and members of vulnerable populations should be easily observable during regular programming, class or activity.

It is Christ Church Lutheran’s goal that two trained, screened adults should supervise children and students at all times.

Christ Church Lutheran requires the following staff/child ratios:

- 1 - 10 students - at least 2 staff members or volunteers (2 adult rule)
- 11 - 29 students - at least 2 staff members or volunteers
- 30+ students - at least 3 staff members or volunteers

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child or youth is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child’s program may be required to complete the Regular Volunteer application and screening process.

Only approved staff and volunteers should be allowed in the areas where the programming, class or activity is being presented to the children, youth, or vulnerable persons.

BEHAVIOR OF PASTORS, CLERGY, EMPLOYEES AND REGULAR VOLUNTEERS:

The following are guidelines for what Christ Church Lutheran believes to be appropriate behavior for pastors, clergy, employees and Regular Volunteers when working with children, youth and members of vulnerable populations:

(1) No physical discipline may be used for behavior management of children, students or vulnerable persons, including spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force.

(2) In the event of a fight or physical altercation, verbally redirect those involved and avoid physical intervention unless necessary for the safety of *other* students. In these instances, staff members and leaders are allowed to restrain a child with appropriate physical force, as needed. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and to the program supervisor.

(3) If a child is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions, that child will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the child’s parent will be contacted to

pick up the child. Any damage of property will be reported to parents, who will be responsible for repairs, including damage incurred at off-campus ministry events.

(4) Verbal, physical or emotional bullying is not acceptable in any of Christ Church Lutheran programs or activities. At the first sign of bullying, warn the bully that this behavior is unacceptable and must be stopped.

(5) Avoid being alone with an individual child in any room or during any program or activity. If one supervising adult must leave, another volunteer or employee should be notified so that the *Two Adult Rule* can be followed. If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single student, move to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. If you need to talk with a student alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area, or have another leader with you. After every event, ensure that every room, area and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

(6) One-to-one meetings with an individual child, youth or vulnerable person must occur at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed. If a closed-door meeting must occur, it should occur on church property, with a second adult present.

(7) Use of tobacco, vaping products, alcohol and drugs is prohibited in any activities or programs involving children, students or members of vulnerable populations.

(8) Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a child or youth. A student's preference *not* to be touched must be respected. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of others.

(9) All persons working with children, youth and members of vulnerable populations under these policies is expected to:

Treat all children, youth and vulnerable persons with respect and consideration;

Treat all children, youth and vulnerable persons equally regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender identity, or sexual orientation;

Use positive techniques of guidance and encouragement rather than competition, comparison or criticism;

Have age appropriate expectations;

Remain at all times with any child under the age of 11 who has been left in my care;

Release a child under the age of 11 only to his or her parent, unless specifically instructed otherwise by the parent;

Remain in view of others at all times whenever I am working with a child or youth;

Be aware of the health of children, youth and vulnerable persons in my care, noting any bumps, bruises, burns, etc., and to report any concerns I have about suspected abuse to the Senior Pastor or Church Council President.

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT

This page is to be signed, dated and returned to the Senior Pastor or the Church Council President.

I have received and read a copy of POLICY FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS on the date listed below, and I understand the importance of the matters set forth herein. I understand and agree to abide by these policies during my service at Christ Church Lutheran.

I understand that if I fail to adhere to this policy, I may be asked to step down from my role. I understand that these policies may be modified at any time by Christ Church Lutheran and it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed.

Staff member or volunteer's name (please print)

Staff member or volunteer's signature

Date