

# **SAFE CHILD/YOUTH POLICY**

## **Christ the King Lutheran Church**

### **June 12, 2017**

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy statement is to provide a safe and harmonious environment for all members and guests of Christ the King Lutheran Church.

Christ the King Lutheran Church is concerned about all types of sexual abuse, harassment, and misconduct, regardless of whether or how it is characterized by law. All reported incidents of sexual misconduct will be investigated. Any suspected sexual misconduct will be reported to the appropriate governmental agency as required by state laws concerning reporting of child abuse.

Christ the King Lutheran Church prohibits sexual misconduct on the part of its pastors, employees, volunteers, independent contractors, parishioners, guests, or any other persons. Christ the King Lutheran Church shall implement policies and procedures that empower victims to report these incidents while at the same time safeguarding the rights of the accused. Such incidences may result in disciplinary actions, including censure, dismissal, criminal charges, or other actions, as deemed appropriate.

Christ the King Lutheran Church shall comply with the recommended investigation procedures as defined by the "Montana Synod Policy on Sexual Misconduct" ratified on February 21, 2015. A copy is on file in the church office or available at [www.montanasynd.org](http://www.montanasynd.org).

## **Definitions**

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and, as such, are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through guidelines, policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

## **Children and Youth**

A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years old.

A youth is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, but still in high school.

## **Church Personnel**

For the purposes of these guidelines, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for the church:

1. All Rostered leadership whether stipendiary or non-stipendiary who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid personnel whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the synod, congregations, schools, camps or other agencies. For example: Pre-schools, After-school Programs, Theater Groups, Choirs, and Day Camps.
3. Those who contract their services to the church, its congregations, schools or other agencies.
4. Volunteers, including any person who enters into or offers him or herself for a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so. Volunteers include members of advisory boards, committees, etc. For example: Adults serving as sponsors at youth gatherings, at camp, in Sunday school classrooms, as drivers, etc.

## Church Personnel fall into one of two categories:

For the purposes of this guideline, the following are included in the definition of **Church Personnel Who Regularly Work With and Around Children or Youth:**

1. All clergy whether stipendiary or non-stipendiary, who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth, other than church school teachers, in ministries, programs or activities more often than occasionally.
3. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle more than occasionally.
4. Any paid personnel whose living quarters are on the grounds of the church, school or other related agency.

For the purposes of this guideline, the following are included in the definition of **Church Personnel Who Occasionally Work With and Around Children or Youth:**

1. Sunday School Teachers.
2. All paid or volunteer Church Personnel whose work regularly takes them throughout the facility or grounds or who have keys giving them access to the buildings on the grounds.
3. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs or activities infrequently, generally no more than three times a year or for one program or activity during a year that lasts less than a month (i.e. assisting with preparation of the Christmas Pageant, teaching one "unit" for rotation Sunday School, serving as a substitute Confirmation mentor, etc.).
4. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle infrequently, generally no more than three times a year (i.e. driving to camp, synod gatherings, service projects, etc.).
5. All persons who work or assist in the nursery four or fewer times a year, whether on an emergency basis or otherwise.
6. Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth once or twice a year.

## Types of Abuse

**Child Neglect:** Omission of the child's basic needs, physical, environmental, emotional and nutritional, that are necessary for a child's wellbeing, or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.

**Emotional Abuse:** Verbal or nonverbal violence toward a child that gives the child the message that the child is "not good" and never will be. Verbal abuse is a very common malady that attacks every human being at some point in their lives; some more than others. It can be a very devastating form of abuse when the person experiences the attacks frequently. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and/or material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.

**Physical Abuse:** Physical violence toward a child. Physical abuse is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth. Often it is the transference of adult anger.

**Sexual Abuse or Sexual Molestation:** Any sexual contact with a child by an adult or an older youth. These acts may range from touching of the penis, vagina, buttocks, or breast/chest area to sexual intercourse. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth. Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.

**Drug & Alcohol Abuse:** There is an increase in the use of alcohol among junior and senior high school students. Children or youth that show up at church under the influence of alcohol or drugs, who bring these substances with them on church retreats, camp or other activities or those who are reported by peers to be intoxicated may need help to stop dangerous behavior.

**Economic Exploitation:** Economic exploitation is the deliberate use of a child or youth for money or power. This includes forcing a child to work, using someone against their will or using another person's labor without offering them adequate compensation.

**Bullying:** Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose. Usually bullying happens over and over. Bullying also can happen on-line or electronically. Cyber bullying is when children or teens bully each other using the Internet, mobile phones or other cyber technology. Unfortunately, not everyone takes bullying seriously, including adults.

## Screening and Selection

Any and all **Church Personnel who Regularly Work With or Around Children or Youth** should be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:

1. A standard application completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks and the code of behavior.
2. Criminal records check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the church. This check is to be updated every 5 years.
3. Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years. This check is to be updated every 5 years. Individual interview with the applicant conducted by appropriate Church Personnel based on the purpose of the position. For example, the Director of Youth Ministries can interview those serving as sponsors, the Director of Music can interview the Children's Choir Director, the Pastoral Call Committee will interview the Pastor, the Pastor may do primary interviews for Church personnel, all based on the design of individual congregations or organizations.
4. Reference checks with persons outside of the congregation or organization who know the applicant, preferably with knowledge of how the applicant interacts with children.
5. Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person may be transporting children or youth.

Any and all **Church Personnel who Occasionally Work With or Around Children or Youth** should be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:

1. A standard application completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks and the code of behavior.
2. Individual interview with the applicant.
3. At least one reference check with a person or persons outside of the congregation who knows the applicant, preferably with knowledge of how the applicant interacts with children.
4. Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person may be transporting children or youth.

All information gathered about an applicant should be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether or not it is appropriate for the applicant to work with children or youth. Church Personnel who work with or around children or youth should have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept. To the extent possible, no person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member when working with or around children or youth. For the purpose of this guideline, immediate family member is defined as spouse, partner, child, parent, sister, brother, similar in-law relationship, stepchild, stepparent, stepsibling, grandparent or co-habitant.

**New Members:** It is recommended that a person be a member of the congregation for a minimum of 6 months, and preferably 1 year before being invited to work with children and youth. Church Personnel who transfer between congregations or organizations and apply for or are asked to or who do undertake a position working with or around children or youth should undergo the same screening and selection process as noted above. This requirement may be met through a transfer of a copy of their personnel file to the new congregation, school, agency or program together with completion of a new application, individual interview, reference checks and copies of criminal background in the applicant's personnel file.

## **Desirable and Undesirable Behaviors**

Christian ministries are committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our Church Personnel from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate; otherwise that decision is left to each individual. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working with or around children or youth.

## **Appropriate and Inappropriate Affection**

Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth.

Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs. Preferred hugs are side-to-side hugs, one-arm hugs and A-frame hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- “High-Fives” and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, shoulders and arms of children or youth
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for huddles with small children
- Holding hands during prayer

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children over three years old on the lap
- Any sexualized touching; touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth
- Wrestling with children or youth
- Tickling children or youth

- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth
- Any form of unwanted affection or physical contact
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, “You sure are developing,” or “You look really hot in those jeans”
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth
- Private meals with individual children or youth
- Private email or written communications with children or youth.
- Private scheduled meetings, outings or events just with child or youth

## **Other Harmful Behavior**

Inappropriate behaviors and interactions can be detected and stopped. Some behaviors may be inherently harmful to children or youth or may be the types used by child molesters to groom children, youth and their parents, or may create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily. Furthermore, some behaviors and interactions are potentially harmful to children or youth in and of themselves.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Using, possessing, distributing or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while serving as sponsors, participating or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.
- ✓ Dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
- ✓ Having sexual contact with a child or youth.
- ✓ Youth or children left unsupervised or given an inappropriate amount of responsibility.
- ✓ Adults sharing inappropriate jokes, stories or personal confessions with children or youth. This includes conversations about their own sexual activities, dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the internet with children or youth.
- ✓ Dancing, games, skits, or jokes that make fun of a person’s gender, ethnicity, socio-economic reality or sexual orientation.



- ✓ Possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.
- ✓ Using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children or youth.
- ✓ Giving gifts or sending special or private emails or other communications to only certain children/youth outside of an appropriate mentoring relationship.
- ✓ Holding children over the age of three on the lap.
- ✓ Transporting children or youth alone.
- ✓ Leaving one adult alone with one child or youth at any time. (Even when waiting for a parent who is running late to pick up the child or youth.)
- ✓ Asking a youth to transport another youth or child. (Youth transporting youth should only be done with written parental permission.)
- ✓ Adults meeting alone with a youth or child in a private location, including a Sunday School room, a home, hotel room or cabin.
- ✓ Housing one adult with one child or youth at a camp, youth gathering or other overnight event.
- ✓ Programs for infants and children under six years old should have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them.
- ✓ Sleeping in the same bed, sleeping bags, tents, hotel rooms or other rooms with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all children or youth in the tent, hotel room or other room. It is preferred that even immediate family members have their own rooms. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleeping with multiple children or youth participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge.
- ✓ Dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth unless unavoidable.
- ✓ Using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.

- ✓ Using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.
- ✓ Participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry or camp activities.

## **Action Plans**

### **Confidentiality**

When a youth asks if you can keep a secret, you should tell them that you are not able to make that commitment. Assure them that you care about them and that you want to hear what they have to say. This includes abuse, suicide threats or information regarding crimes.

### **Action Plan When You Suspect Abuse:**

1. Document your concerns.
2. Share concerns with supervisor, pastor or board chair.
3. Report confirmed abuse to legal authorities. (for instructions see page 12)
4. Continue to love and support the child or youth and seek to have appropriate follow up care by you or others in church.

### **Action Plan for Known Sexual & Physical Abuse:**

1. Give Affirmation & Hope
  - Praise the youth for having the courage to come forward.
  - Give hope through your willingness to listen, understand and care for them.
2. Give Assurance
  - I love you and I will accept you no matter what.
  - God loves you no matter what.
  - You can be totally honest.
  - Please don't be afraid to tell the whole story.
  - Don't be afraid to admit your fears or present your perspective.
  - I promise to listen and to do everything I can to understand you and help you. (Only say this if you intend to follow through.)
3. Assist the child or youth in facing the issue. If this is a sexual abuse issue, this is a conversation that needs to be heard by

more than one Church Personnel, if possible. Encourage the child or youth to talk with another adult, preferably of the same gender. This is for your protection, as well as that of the child or youth, if questions of further sexual abuse arise.

4. It is important for the child or youth to understand they have been abused. Even if the child entered the relationship willingly, a sexual relationship between an adult and a child or youth is abusive.
5. Encourage the child or youth to get professional help. Assist them or have someone in the church assist them in connecting with a professional counselor. Work with a parent or parents to make a plan for recovery. If they are in immediate harm in their home, assist them in temporary shelter.
6. Acknowledge your responsibility to document the abuse and to share this information with the authorities.
7. Continue to be part of the healing of the child or youth, as appropriate.

## **Reporting Inappropriate Behavior or Policy Violations**

1. When Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with the policy, they should promptly report their observations.
2. Such inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported in one of the following ways:
  - a. A telephone call, email, or meeting with the immediate supervisor of that person,
  - b. A telephone call, email, or meeting with the pastor or other leader in authority,
  - c. A telephone call, email, or meeting with the church council president, organizational or agency board president,
  - d. A telephone call, meeting, or email to the Synod Bishop, or Assistants to the Bishop.
3. All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth who need to be taken seriously.

## Reporting Abuse

1. Church Personnel may be legally required to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state authorities.

According to Montana State Law, Section 41-3-201, those having cause to suspect that a minor has been the victim of abuse must report the case to the Department of Public Health and Human Services, Child and Family Services Division.

**Call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week  
Montana statewide toll-free child abuse hotline: 866-820-  
KIDS (866-820-5437)**

A trained Intake Specialist will take your information and will send it to your local Child and Family Services Division office where a child protection specialist will investigate the report. If it is an emergency, the information will be immediately transmitted to the local office. **Law enforcement will be informed when appropriate.**

Any person who reports an incident in good faith is immune from either civil or criminal liability.

2. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth may be a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, "in good faith" means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
3. In addition to reporting to the state authorities, Church Personnel are to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Church Personnel directly to the pastor, organizational or council president so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims.

Christ the King Lutheran Church  
4383 Durston Road  
Bozeman, MT 59718

Phone: 406-587-4131  
Fax: 406-587-9789  
Email: [cyf@ctkbozeman.org](mailto:cyf@ctkbozeman.org)

Contact a pastor, either by phone or in person. If it is not possible to notify a pastor directly, write a letter stating the complaint to the pastor at:

Christ the King Lutheran Church  
4383 Durston Road  
Bozeman, MT 59718

4. Reports of suspected or known abuse that involve rostered Church Personnel should be reported to the Bishop or Assistants to the Bishop through a telephone call, or meeting.

**The Rev. Jessica Crist, Bishop, Montana Synod of the ELCA**  
**2415 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, S.**  
**Great Falls, MT 59405**  
[jcrist@montanasynod.org](mailto:jcrist@montanasynod.org)  
**406-453-1461 (O) 406-868-7658 (C)**

## **Guidelines for Counseling and Advising Children and Youth**

Unless you are a trained, certified, professional counselor, you are not qualified to handle every situation that may arise as you serve children and youth in ministry. Issues that should be referred to your Pastor and/or to a trained professional after responsible reporting include:

Child Neglect  
Emotional Abuse  
Physical Abuse  
Sexual Abuse or Sexual Molestation  
Drug & Alcohol Abuse  
Economic Exploitation

## **Suicide**

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15-24 year olds. Suicide occurs 3-4 times more often in boys than in girls. The most common method is by gun. Cluster suicide is becoming a growing problem. Using alcohol or drugs or experiencing depression increases the incidence of suicide. Suicide threats or casual remarks should always be taken seriously. Report this immediately! The person may sound casual about

suicide, but only because suicide seems no worse than the other mental pain that they are already suffering. Parents of youth and the pastor in the congregation should always be alerted about suicide threats. Suicide threats often require the involvement of mental health professionals.

## **Social Media**

"Social media are a collection of online platforms and tools that people use to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives, and media itself, facilitating conversations and interactions online between groups of people." -Doreen Moran, Digital and Social Marketing

### **“Friending”**

Friending youth is a powerful ministry tool when used appropriately. When adults “friend” people under age 18 they should also “friend” their parents. Involving parents in this decision is important. An example of this request: I would like to request to be your child’s friend on Facebook and/or twitter. I prefer "friending" both youth and their parents as part of my practice to promote transparency and appropriate adult – youth relationships. I encourage you to monitor all of your child’s social media practices. I am happy to support you in navigating social media with your youth. This practice promotes the safety of children and youth while providing good accountability with the adults who work with youth.

### **Posts**

Social media, by its very definition, is a public forum. There is no privacy in social media, even with the use of security settings. Think before you post. Would you say this in a room filled with congregation members? With youth? Be aware of unintended consequences that may result from the misunderstanding of posts.

### **Groups or Pages**

Consider communities that gather on Facebook in the same way you would a community gathered in a room or a home. Youth Pages or Groups should be monitored at all times by Safe Haven Adults.

**RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE  
CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH  
SAFE CHILD/YOUTH POLICY**

I have received and read a copy of the Christ the King Lutheran Church Safe Child/Youth Policy.

By signing this form, the employee or volunteer acknowledges that this policy supersedes all previous church handbooks, policies and any other published or unpublished statements concerning abuse and misconduct. The signed original of this agreement should be given to the church office. This will be retained in your personnel file.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_