

# Safe Church

## Policies and Procedures

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
*Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*  
183 West Main Street  
Westborough, Massachusetts 01581

### **A EDUCATIONAL OVERVIEW**

#### **A.1 Introduction**

##### **A.1.1. Mission**

Our mission statement – We are growing, nurturing, making disciples in Christ – calls us to create a community of faith where children, youth and adults can participate together in ministry in a safe and secure environment. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church is committed to being a safe haven for children and youth and all adults – a place where all persons are protected from any form of exploitation and abuse. We therefore adopt this policy for the protection of everyone and prevention of abuse in our church.

##### **A.1.2. Purpose**

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Safe Church Policies and Procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety, emotional integrity, and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and adults. We have established these policies and procedures in order:

- To provide a safe and secure environment for all who participate within the faith community and activities of our congregation.
- To provide standards and procedures for evaluating a person's suitability to work with children and youth in our congregation.
- To satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members that we have employed a comprehensive screening process for all volunteer parish workers.
- To provide a system which quickly and thoroughly responds to the victims of any abuse or inappropriate behavior, to their families, as well as to the accused.
- To reduce the possibility of false accusations against clergy, employees and volunteers.
- To satisfy the requirements of our insurance providers and to reduce the risk exposure of our parish.
- To accomplish the above while maintaining an environment and atmosphere of trust and respect grounded in Christian love and compassion.

##### **A.1.3. Conclusion**

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure safety and spiritual growth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of staff and volunteers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our staff and volunteers who work with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs. A Safe Church Committee will be formed to monitor the implementation of all procedures and to review annually this policy and the accompanying procedures. Revisions will be presented to the Congregation Council for approval.

## **A. 2 Overview of Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth**

The following procedures are to be followed to aid in protecting our children, youth and adult leaders in children and youth ministries:

### **A.2.1. Hiring and Recruiting Workers**

- a. A completed Safe Church Covenant will be required from all volunteer workers.
- b. All volunteer workers with children and youth will have been actively involved in the worship and ministries of this congregation for at least six months before assuming the volunteer assignment in ministries involving children and youth.
- c. All adult volunteers and workers in ministries involving children and youth will have passed a criminal records (CORI) check before assuming an assignment in such ministries.
- d. Anyone with a prior conviction of any form of child abuse will not be eligible to work with children/youth in any capacity.  If the Pastor is aware of other at-risk behaviors in an individual's past, s/he will consult with the Safe Church Committee and could prevent the participation of that individual in children/youth related activities with no explanation required to the group recruiting that person. This would protect the confidentiality of the Pastor/parishioner relationship as well as protecting the safety of the children/youth.
- e. All information obtained from the CORI background check will be held in strict confidence and kept in a locked file at the church.

### **A.2.2. Providing A Safe Environment**

- a. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church will offer annually:
  - Safe Church orientation and training for all staff and volunteers in ministries involving children and youth.
  - First Aid/CPR training as needed.
- b. The primary or lead worker in all ministries involving children and youth will be at least eighteen years of age. For church-sponsored programs involving high school students, the adult worker who will be present and assume primary responsibility must be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth participant in the program.
- c. For events and activities which take place at times other than Sunday morning or away from the church building, the ratio of adults to children or youth will be at least 1:6. At least two trained adult workers will be present at all times during any non-Sunday morning church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children under 18 years of age. At no time should a child or youth be alone with an adult.
- d. At no time will any worker engage in physical discipline of a minor. Verbal discipline must never be demeaning or abusive. Any discipline problems should be reported to the child's parents.
- e. A signed parental permission slip will be required for all events held off site.
- f. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church will provide and maintain safe and appropriate equipment and supervision during church sponsored activities on church property.
- g. Any incident/injury involving a minor that occurs on church property, or under the jurisdiction of the church, must be reported on an *Incident Report Form* as soon as

possible after the incident occurs. A copy of this report is to be provided to the parents/guardians of the child involved, and to the Safe Church Committee.

- h. During Sunday School Class times, the Christian Education Director, or someone s/he designates will monitor the classroom activity. Where possible the classroom doors will be left open.
- i. All workers in ministries involving children and youth will be encouraged to participate in an annual orientation which will include a review of these policies and procedures, and be required to sign a written covenant to uphold these policies and procedures.

### **A.2.3. Basic Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Abuse**

- a. When an allegation of child abuse is made against a worker in the church, the parents of the child will be notified immediately. The person who receives the report of the allegation of abuse will place the child who is the alleged victim of the abuse in a secure area, with the supervision of at least two adults not involved in the abuse incident, until the child's parents arrive.
- b. The alleged abuser will be told of the allegation immediately. If the alleged abuser is a minor, his/her parents will be notified immediately. This person will be immediately removed from further participation in church-sponsored programs that involve children and youth. Based on the final outcome of the abuse allegation, the person's further involvement in church-sponsored programs involving children and youth will be decided by the Congregation Council.
- c. The pastor will be notified immediately of the abuse allegation. Depending on the seriousness of the allegation, the Safe Church Committee will be responsible for notifying the appropriate authorities (including the state Department of Early Education and Care [DEEC], the Department of Social Services [DSS], the New England Synod, the congregation's insurance agent, and the congregation's attorney). Any person with responsibility for the care of children is required to make a report to the Safe Church Committee or directly to the DEEC/DSS if they have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or if they have observed conditions that could result in child abuse.
- d. The pastor will also serve as the sole media spokesperson, making any necessary statements or responses to the news media. The identities of the child who is the alleged victim, the child's parents, and the alleged abuser will be kept confidential.
- e. The pastor or a person designated by the pastor will prepare a brief, carefully worded statement to the congregation, telling the truth, but withholding the names of the alleged victim and the accused.
- f. When a pastor is accused of abuse, the New England Synod Office of the Bishop will be notified immediately and assume the responsibilities assigned to the Pastor in items 3.c,d,e. above.

### **A.3 LOCATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Copies of the Safe Church Policies and Procedures will be kept in binders in three locations:

- 1. the Church Office;
- 2. the Christian Education office; and
- 3. the Kenneth O. Bean Library.

All forms referenced in this document are located in Section J.

## **B KEY POLICY**

Any person who seeks possession of a key to GSLC must have a clearly stated reason for needing a key and must be approved by the Church Council through the Property Committee.

Certain people are authorized by virtue of their position in the church to hold keys. These people include paid employees, officers of the church, committee chairmen, youth group leaders, Sunday School Superintendent, Altar Care, group leaders, etc.

Others must receive the approval of Council to be in possession of a key.

Key holders will familiarize themselves with the Youth Protection Guidelines outlined on page 11, sign a Statement of Compliance, which is then submitted as a Key Receipt Form.

Records of key holders will be maintained by the church's Administrative Assistant. Updated lists will be provided for the Safe Church Committee. Keys shall be returned when they are no longer needed by the holder, and the return will be documented.

It will be the responsibility of the Council through the property committee to monitor who is in possession of keys and request the return of keys from persons no longer authorized to hold them. Keys are not to be loaned to unauthorized persons, duplicated, or kept beyond the time that they are needed.

## **C SCREENING AND HIRING**

### **C.1 APPLICATIONS POLICY**

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church welcomes volunteers, who have been actively and regularly participating as members or friends of the Church for at least six months, and church staff to become involved with the various programs offered as part of the Youth Ministry.

### **C.2 DEFINITIONS**

**GSLC:** Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

**Authorized Volunteer:** Any person who offers or is recruited, has completed the appropriate disclosure form as outlined in sub-section C.3 and has been accepted by the appropriate supervisor, Board, or Committee at GSLC to provide unpaid services.

**External Candidate:** An applicant for a position, paid or volunteer, who is not a member of GSLC, has not been actively and regularly participating as a member or friend of the church for at least six months, or has never held a position at GSLC previously.

**Staff or Paid Employee:** Any individual hired and compensated by GSLC on a part-time, full-time, temporary, or permanent basis.

**Direct Contact:** Someone who has the immediate responsibility for the care of children or regular face to face interaction with children, such as Sunday School teachers/assistants, youth group leaders, FINK guides/mentors, youth choir directors, special project volunteers or nursery supervisors.

**CE:** Christian Education

**CED:** Christian Education Director. In the absence of a CED, Church School Superintendent may be substituted.

**Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI):** Information regulated by the Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) and maintained by the Board of Probation regarding criminal convictions of persons within the Massachusetts Court System.

**Certification:** A process by which an organization is granted legal access to CORI after a review of an application submitted by that organization to the Criminal History Systems Board.

**Agreement of Non-Disclosure (AOND):** A signed form, submitted by anyone who is certified to have access to CORI, in which they agree to certain terms of confidentiality.

**CORI Administrator:** The designated coordinator of CORI requests and the information received as a result.

**Safe Church Advocate:** A member of GSLC who meets the requirements of an Authorized Volunteer, is appointed by and accountable to the Church Council, and has cleared a CORI check. The Council will maintain a list of qualified volunteers to serve as resources and support for the Safe Church Advocate and to be called upon as needed. The Safe Church Advocate will:

1. Be a certified CORI officer and serve as the CORI Administrator
2. Receive and maintain a file of Incident Report Forms
3. File Mandated Report Forms with the Department of Social Services and
4. Serve on the Safe Church Committee.

**Safe Church Committee:** A three member committee appointed by Council to coordinate the implementation of the policies and procedures contained in this document. The committee consists of the Safe Church Advocate, the Council President, and one Pastor. Both genders must be represented.

### C.3 APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. The following documents must be completed when serving in GSLC ministries:

	Employment Application	Disclosure Form	CORI Check Authorization	Safe Church Covenant
<b>Candidates for Employment</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Authorized Onsite Volunteers: Teachers, assistants, nursery</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Authorized Offsite Volunteers: Youth Leaders</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Overnight Chaperones</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Day Chaperones and Drivers</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

2. All applications for paid employment or authorized volunteer positions requiring a Disclosure Form will be reviewed by an appropriate supervisor, Board, or Committee. Before assuming a paid or volunteer position, the applicant will be interviewed.
  - a. Gaps in time, irregular employment patterns, or unexplained absences noted on Application for Employment must be pursued with both former employers and potential employees.
  - b. For candidates for paid positions, references will be contacted for information that may be helpful in determining the applicant's suitability for the position being sought.
  - c. For candidates for volunteer positions, references may be contacted at the discretion of the supervisor or supervisory board or committee.
  - d. Interviews will be conducted with those applicants who are deemed suitable following the review of the application and contact with previous employers and references.
  - e. If the applicant is deemed suitable for the position being sought, a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check will be conducted if required per sub-section C.4.

## **C.4 CORI CHECK POLICY**

The role of the Safe Church Advocate serving as the CORI Administrator is to ensure that:

1. Anyone who needs to request information has sent in the AOND
2. Anyone who no longer needs to receive information has had their name removed from the Church's certification
3. All appropriate applicants; in written form, have consented to a CORI investigation
4. Information received as a result of the CORI investigation is reviewed according to the criteria set forth in sub-section C.5 and
5. Information collected is held in confidence.

In order to ensure that employees and volunteers are appropriate for their positions, a CORI check will be performed on candidates for the following roles:

1. Paid employees
2. Ordained staff, whether paid or unpaid
3. Teachers, assistants and nursery staff
4. Youth Group leaders and
5. Certain chaperones at the discretion of the Learning and Youth Committees.
6. Key holders and leaders of non church groups using the facilities

Upon receipt of the Disclosure Form and Authorization to Request CORI, the CORI Administrator will submit a request to the CHSB for investigation. If the CORI investigation determines that a criminal record exists, the Safe Church Advocate will review the information in accordance with the criteria set forth in this policy, and will consult with the church's attorney if necessary. After such review, the Safe Church Advocate will make a decision regarding the personnel transaction at issue.

## **C.5 POLICY FOR REVIEW OF CRIMINAL RECORDS**

The following criteria should be used by the Safe Church Advocate in conducting a review:

1. Anyone convicted of, or who admits to, committing child abuse, whether physical, emotional, or sexual, will not be considered, under any circumstances, for a position involving contact with children and youth.
2. There will be a presumption that the applicant is ineligible for any position involving direct contact with children and youth if the background check indicates a felony conviction for crime which involves the use of force or violence, rape, performing an unnatural act, sodomy, indecent assault, battery, or the crime of attempting any of the aforementioned offenses; or illegally manufacturing, distributing, or dispensing any controlled substances or the crime of possession with intent to manufacture, distribute or dispense a controlled substance, or has been charged with any felony listed above and is either awaiting trial or has been defaulted by the court.
3. The Safe Church Advocate may consider other factors as s/he deems appropriate that bear on a candidate's suitability for a paid or volunteer position.

## **D YOUTH PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION**

### **D.1 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Westborough is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, we will provide supervision for all activities and programs involving children and youth, and employ practices that provide for the safety of children, youth, and those who care for them.

A member of GSLC may participate in supervision if s/he has been a member for at least six months or has attended GSLC regularly for at least six months. Exceptions may be made by the Safe Church Committee upon receipt of a verified reference from a leader in the volunteer's previous church.

### **D.2 YOUTH PROTECTION DEFINITIONS**

**Chaperone:** A volunteer who helps supervise youth for a special activity, such as a party or field trip. To be an approved chaperone, an individual must be at least 21 years old and a minimum of five years older than the oldest youth participating in the activity.

**Helper, Assistant:** A volunteer for regular youth activities, such as Sunday School and related activities or youth group, who functions in a non-supervisory role.

**Supervisor:** A paid or volunteer worker who has direct responsibility for the care of youth, such as a teacher, youth group leader, chaperone, or choir director.

**Field Trip:** A youth event that is scheduled off GSLC property, whether for in-town or out-of-town, one hour, one day, or overnight.

### **D.3 YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES**

#### **D.3.1 Two Adult Rule**

No adult will be alone in the Church, or at a church approved activity, with a child or children, unless they are related to the children. Two adults, not married to each other, must be present with a child or children under 18 years of age at all times. If the supervisors are a married couple, then a third adult must be present. If a second (or third) adult cannot be located, the class or activity will be canceled, and the children will be returned to their parent/s or guardian/s. It is permissible to have one adult per car with each car carrying a group of young people on a field trip. It is permissible to have one adult per Sunday School classroom, with a clear window in the door, and an adult supervisor monitoring the classrooms periodically.

#### **D.3.2. Age Rule**

1. Classroom and nursery helpers must be three years older than the oldest participant in the class, group, or activity.
2. To work with high school youth, the assistants and teachers must be at least 5 years older than the oldest participant in class.



### **D.3.3 Medical Release Forms**

1. All youth participating in a youth group or going on a field trip with either a youth group or the Sunday School, must have a Medical Release Form on file before the participation.
2. Form must be given to youth or parents/guardians to be completed and returned to the Director of Christian Education for Sunday School events, or the Youth Group Leader for youth group participation.
3. Completed form will be kept on file in the Christian Education (CE) office.
4. Each time a field trip or overnight event occurs, the original must be taken with an adult leader while a copy remains in the CE office.

### **D.3.4 Field Trip/Youth Event Guidelines**

1. One month advance notice: The Learning Committee and the Youth Committee should receive a proposal at least one month in advance for all Sunday School and Youth field trips respectively and all evening or overnight functions at the church (with the exception of regular youth group meetings).
2. Approval: All field trips or events should receive the approval of the Learning or Youth Committee before fundraising for the activity begins and the activity can take place.
3. Approval of Chaperones: All chaperones for youth activities must be approved by the Learning or Youth Committee.
4. Parental Consent: Parents or guardians should be fully informed about programs, activities, leaders, chaperones, dates and times, cost method of transportation, and purpose of the scheduled trip or activity. The appropriate signed Event Permission Form should be completed and returned before any child or youth can participate in the event.
5. Vehicle Rules:
  - a. Drivers for field trips must be 25 years or older and have a copy of their driver's license and registration on file.
  - b. Anyone who has had their license revoked or suspended within the past seven years will be ineligible to drive for youth activities. If the license was revoked or suspended more than seven years ago, the Learning or Youth Committee will make a decision as to suitability.
  - c. All occupants of a vehicle are required to use a seat belt.

6. Appropriate Supervision The two adult rule applies for all church-related events. If the minimum level of supervision cannot be achieved, the activity must be cancelled; this may result in the loss of deposit fees for which the church cannot be responsible.
  - a. Non-overnight activities on church property: 2 adults for each group.
  - b. Day trips off church property: 1 adult for 6 youths for Pre-School to 1<sup>st</sup> grade;  
1 adult for 8 youths for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and up (minimum two adults).
  - c. Overnight activities either on or off church property: 1 adult for 8 youths of one gender (2 adults minimum). Girls and boys are to be considered two separate groups with the 2 adult rule applied to each group. Girls and boys will sleep in separate areas. Adult supervision of the sleeping area will adhere to the rules of the facility/event.

### **D.3.5 Discipline**

The purpose of discipline with youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of Christian responsibility, respect, and cooperation.

1. No youth will be disciplined by the use of any form of physical punishment.
2. Supervisors are encouraged to listen to the youth, and clearly communicate expectations of appropriate behavior.
3. If a child's behavior is disruptive, one of the adults in the classroom may leave to seek the DCE or the child's parent to come to the classroom.

### **D.3.6 Appropriate Activities**

Activities that involve inappropriate physical contact are not suitable recreational activities.

#### D.4 YOUTH PROTECTION GUIDELINES (outlined)

Length of time a volunteer needs to attend Church before supervising youth:	6 months minimum
Disclosure form and Criminal background (CORI) checks to be conducted for these positions:	Pastors and/or Volunteer Ordained Staff Employees and staff Sunday School teachers Nursery staff Children's Choir Directors Youth Group Leaders Regular helpers in classrooms, nursery or youth groups
Disclosure Form will be required for:	All of the above Chaperones for field trips and youth events Regular helpers in classrooms, nursery, or Youth groups Onsite volunteers Key holders and leaders of non-church groups using the facilities
Statement of Compliance with the <i>Safe Church Covenant</i> will be required for:	Anyone in possession of a key Anyone having regular direct contact with children
Key Policy	Will continue as is with spousal privileges
Two Adult Rule	At all times at least two adults (not married to each other) must be with a child/ren to whom they are not related
Age Rule	Sunday School & Nursery Helpers must be 3 years older than the oldest child in the class or group High School workers must be 5 years older than the oldest youth in the group.
Medical Release Forms required annually	All children and youth participants, plus adult chaperones for overnight trips
Event Permission Forms required of:	All children and youth participants in offsite events
Approval of CE or Youth Committee needed for:	Field trips and youth events Chaperones for field trips and youth events Drivers for field trips and youth events
Adult to child supervision ratios:	<u>In church during the day</u> – 2 adults per group <u>Day trip off-site, special on-site youth event</u> – 1 adult per 6 youth for pre-school through 1 <sup>st</sup> grade (minimum 2 adults) – 1 adult per 8 youth for 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade and up (minimum 2 adults) <u>Overnight</u> – 1 adult per 8 youth of one gender (2 adults minimum). Girls and boys are to be considered two separate groups with the 2 adult rule applied to each group.
Drivers for field trips and youth events:	Must be 25 years or older Must have a safe driving record
Discipline:	Positive, non-physical discipline only

## **E SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

### **E.1 REPORTING AND RESPONSE POLICY**

Members of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church community, including volunteers working in the youth ministry, are morally obligated to immediately report all reasonable suspicions of child abuse to the Safe Church Advocate or one of the mandated reporters listed below.. All reported suspicions of child abuse will in turn be reported by the Safe Church Advocate orally to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Social Services.

All allegations will be investigated with due respect for the dignity and privacy of everyone involved. Activities related to the handling of complaints or incidents will be documented, and documents will be maintained in a secure location determined by the Safe Church Advocate. When necessary, full cooperation will be given to civil authorities under the guidance of the church's attorney.

### **E.2 DEFINITIONS**

**Child:** A person under the age of eighteen as defined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**Mandated Reporter:** A person who, by virtue of their profession or position, is required by law to report all reasonable suspicions of child abuse. As of 5/3/2002, the law applies to three categories of church personnel:

1. Clergy (including licensed or commissioned ministers);
2. Anyone performing duties on behalf of the church in the role of a pastor; and
3. A select group of church employees (not volunteers), such as those who supervise, educate, coach, train or counsel children on a regular basis.

Because of the vulnerability of children, their right to our protection supersedes a counselees right to confidentiality. Mandated reporters at GSLC are:

1. Pastors
2. Director of Christian Education
3. Director of Music
4. Nursery Coordinator
5. Stephen Ministers.

**Incident Report:** Anyone with reasonable cause for suspected child abuse must prepare a written incident report that contains all the information regarding the allegation of child abuse. The Incident Report must be submitted to the Safe Church Advocate within 24 hours following the initial report of alleged child abuse.

**Mandated Report:** A written report prepared by the Safe Church Advocate and based on the information contained in the Incident Report. The Mandated Report must be submitted to the Department of Social Services within 48 hours of the initial oral report of alleged child abuse to the Department.

### **E.3 REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

#### **E.3.1 Ensure the child's safety**

1. Call an ambulance, and police, if the injury is severe.
2. Make a reasonable attempt to inform the Safe Church Advocate who will inform the parent(s). If the Safe Church Advocate is not available, contact the Pastor or CED who will inform the parents.

#### **E.3.2. Oral Reports**

1. The Safe Church Advocate must be informed immediately, either by the person initially reporting the incident, or by their designee or one of the designated reporters, such as the Pastor or CED.
2. The Safe Church Advocate will make an oral report to DSS by means of a phone call if there is reason to believe that child abuse has occurred.

#### **E.3.3 Incident Report**

1. Submit an Incident Report within 24 hours of the oral report:
  - a. The Safe Church Advocate will assist in the completion of the Incident Report.
  - b. An Incident Report must be submitted even if it is determined that a mandated report is not necessary.

#### **E.3.4 Mandated Report**

1. Submit a Mandated Report to DSS within 48 hours of the oral report:
  - a. Anyone with a reasonable suspicion of child abuse is free to report this directly to the Department of Social Services. In such situations, the reporter must still inform the Safe Church Advocate of the alleged child abuse together with the fact that it has already been reported to the Department. The reporter must still prepare an Incident Report for the Safe Church Advocate.
  - b. However, in order to avoid duplicate reports and ensure that proper procedures are followed, it is recommended that mandated reporters, such as the Safe Church Advocate, Pastors, or CED, be designated within the church. The person originally reporting the incident will not be identified on the Mandated Report.
2. After reviewing the Incident Report, the Safe Church committee may determine that there is no reasonable cause to contact DSS and file a Mandated Report. This determination must be documented in writing and filed with the Incident Report. If the original reporter disagrees, that person may contact DSS directly; they will be assisted as needed in completing the Mandated Report and will be identified as the reporter.

#### **E.3.5 Follow-up, investigation, documentation**

1. The Safe Church Advocate will inform the accused of the complaint against him or her once the child's safety is ensured.
2. There will be a meeting with the accused to discuss the accusation. One party present will make and sign a record of the meeting, including date and time, location of the meeting, the parties present, and the disposition of the child. Both volunteers and paid staff should be given the recommendation to obtain their own lawyer. GSLC will not pay for counsel for the accused.
3. No meetings regarding an accusation of child abuse can occur unless there are at least

three people present, including two from the Safe Church Committee investigating the allegation.

4. The accused will immediately be removed from all contact with children. Paid employees will be suspended with pay or have their ministry restricted to exclude contact with children.
5. The Safe Church Advocate will inform the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) (if they were not the ones accused) of the concern, whether or not a report is filed with DSS.
6. The pastor will be notified of all complaints. Depending on the seriousness of the allegation, the pastor will be responsible for notifying the appropriate authorities (including the state Department of Early Education and Care [DEEC], the New England Synod, the congregation's insurance agent, and the congregation's attorney).

#### **E.4 RESPONSE FOLLOWING A MANDATED REPORT**

1. The response following a report of alleged child abuse, including contact with the church's attorney, will be coordinated by the Safe Church Advocate.
2. If there is an allegation against pastoral staff, a church Council member, designated by the President of Council, will contact the Bishop's office. The church will seek the counsel of the Bishop's staff regarding action to be taken.

##### **E.4.1 Investigation**

1. The extent to which information will be shared with the congregation will be determined by the Council President and others as appropriate. The input of the Bishop's staff may be sought and, if pastoral staff is involved, the Bishop's staff may be consulted in making this decision.
2. All necessary parties will cooperate with the investigations made by DSS and the police.
3. If necessary, the Council will appoint a liaison to be the designated contact with the media.

##### **E.4.2 Continuing the Ministry of the Church**

1. Pastoral support will be offered to all parties involved, including those who have made the complaint, the accused, the families of both, and the congregation. Decisions about how this support will be given will be made by pastoral staff and the Church Council.
2. If the allegations involve pastoral staff, the ministry of the church will need to be maintained while the issue is being addressed. Decisions regarding how this will be accomplished will be made by the Church Council with assistance from the Bishop's staff.

#### **E.5 Documentation**

All information obtained during the investigation, all activities related to the issue being addressed, and all findings are to be carefully documented and signed, including dates, times, and locations of all activities and meetings; the names of the parties present; any decisions or conclusions made; and any further action to be taken. This documentation is to be retained in a secure location determined by the Safe Church Advocate.

## F ADULT CONDUCT

### F.1 PROHIBITION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND HARASSMENT

GSLC strives to create and maintain a community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. The church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment of any kind, and such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention of the church to respond to allegations of behavior that are contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate it.

### F.2 POLICY ON MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

All persons engaged in the ministry of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual exploitation of parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of GSLC is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

### F.3 DEFINITIONS

**Minister:** A person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. For the purposes of this document, a minister includes pastors and other elected or appointed leaders of the church, associates in ministry, employees, ordained clergy, Stephen Ministers and volunteers.

**Ordained clergy:** A person ordained by the church and on the national church roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or on a roster recognized by the ELCA.

**Church member:** A person who has formally joined GSLC by confirmation, profession of faith, transfer of membership from another church, or reaffirmation of faith.

**Associate member, friend of the church:** A person holding membership in other Christian congregations who wishes to retain such membership, but desires to participate in the life and mission of this congregation.

**Ministerial relationship:** The relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

**Sexual exploitation:** Activity or conduct of a sexual nature in which a minister engaged in the work of the Church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.

**Harassment:** Repeated misconduct, whether verbal or physical, that creates an environment that is uncomfortable, unwelcoming, discriminating, or intimidating, or leads to an atmosphere in which a person's ability to participate in worship and activities at the church is compromised.

**Sexual harassment:** Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination.

## **G COMPLAINTS OF MISCONDUCT**

### **G.1 INFORMAL MEASURES**

1. The complainant(s) has the option to resolve complaints using informal measures.
  - a. The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual(s) accused of sexual exploitation or harassment.
  - b. The complainant is under no obligation to resolve a matter using informal measures. The complainant is free to initiate a formal complaint at any time.

### **G.2 FORMAL MEASURES**

1. If an informal resolution of the complaint(s) does not seem appropriate or does not succeed, formal proceedings may be instituted. The Safe Church Advocate will be informed of all formal complaints, and the complainant(s) may request of the Safe Church Advocate that s/he initiate an investigation using the following procedure:
  - a. Gather statements from individuals involved and anyone else with pertinent information. All individuals with information relevant to the complainant's accusation are expected to cooperate fully with the investigation.
  - b. Interviews and investigations should be conducted in the presence of at least two members of the Safe Church Committee, with gender representation as appropriate, to verify the content of same.
  - c. Consider all information and make a determination of findings.
  - d. Findings that the complaint is verified may result in recommendations to Council for action, such as:
    - Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior, including possible public notification
    - Requiring a program of growth that may include education and/or counseling
    - Probation, with the terms of probation clearly identified
    - Dismissal from employment or volunteer leadership position, and, in extreme cases, affiliation with, or membership in, the church.
2. The pastor will be notified of all complaints. Depending on the seriousness of the allegation, the pastor will be responsible for notifying the appropriate authorities (including the state Department of Early Education and Care [DEEC], Department of Social Services [DSS], the New England Synod, the congregation's insurance agent, and the congregation's attorney).
3. Verified findings and follow-up action taken by the Council will be communicated to the complainant. If the Safe Church Committee finds that no sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred, this finding will be expressed to both the employee or volunteer and the complainant.
4. When a complaint is made against the pastor, the New England Synod Office of the Bishop will be notified immediately and will assume the responsibilities assigned to the Safe Church Advocate.



### **G.3 APPEAL**

If the complainant(s) or accused person(s) is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter, he or she has the right to appeal to the Council who will appoint a committee to review the complaint.

### **G.4 DOCUMENTATION**

All information obtained during the investigation, all activities related to the issue being addressed, and all findings are to be carefully documented and signed, including dates, times, and locations of all activities and meetings; the names of the parties present; any decisions or conclusions made; and any further action to be taken. This documentation is to be retained in a secure location determined by the Safe Church Advocate.

## **G.5 Basic Procedures for Responding to the Allegations of Abuse – Outlined from E.2.3**

### **Mandated reporter**

Any person with responsibility for the care of children is required to make a report to the Safe Church Committee or directly to the DEEC/DSS if they have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or if they have observed conditions that could result in child abuse.

### **Maintain confidentiality of**

- child, who is alleged victim
- the child's parents
- alleged abuser

### **Person who receives the report of abuse**

- If report received at the moment of abuse, place child (alleged victim) in secure area with at least 2 adults (not involved) until parents arrive
- Notify Safe Church Advocate and Pastor immediately

### **Parents**

- Notified immediately
- Secure safety of child
- Contacted by Safe Church Advocate, + meets with Safe Church Committee

### **Pastor**

- Notified immediately
- Sole media spokesperson
- Inform congregation of a situation without violating confidentiality
- One Pastor serves on Safe Church Committee

### **Alleged abuser**

- Immediately informed of the allegation
- If a minor, her/his parents notified immediately
- No participation in church programs involving youth/children until resolution of incident

### **Safe Church Committee**

- Receives incident report
- Determines merit of incident
- Notify appropriate authorities, and report suspected abuse (depending upon seriousness of the allegation) as described in section E.3.
  - State Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) / DSS
  - The New England Synod
  - Congregation's insurance agent
  - Congregation's attorney
  - Congregation Council

### **The New England Synod Office of the Bishop (if a pastor is accused of abuse)**

- Notified immediately
- Assumes pastoral responsibilities

## **G.6 Complaints of Misconduct: Formal Measures – Outlined from G.2**

### **Complainant(s)**

- Request Safe Church Advocate to initiate an investigation
- Informed of verified findings and follow-up action

### **Safe Church Advocate / Safe Church Committee**

- Informed of all formal complaints
- Gathers all pertinent information
- Interviews and investigations allegations
- Considers information and makes determination of findings
- Makes recommendations to Council for action

### **Congregation Council**

- Verify findings
- Determine follow-up action (G.2.d)
- Communicates findings to the alleged abuser and to the complainant

### **Pastor**

- Notified of all complaints
- Responsible to notify appropriate authorities (depending on seriousness)
  - State Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC)
  - Department of Social Services (DSS)
  - The New England Synod
  - Congregation's insurance agent
  - Congregation's attorney

### **New England Synod Office of the Bishop** (when complaint is against the pastor)

- Assumes responsibilities assigned to the Safe Church Advocate

## H TRAINING AND EDUCATION

### H.1 POLICY ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. Every effort will be made to train all employees and volunteers as deemed appropriate regarding Safe Church Policies and Procedures.
2. Staff and volunteers who have regular direct contact with youth should also be educated about child abuse awareness and be required to sign the Safe Church Covenant.
3. The leader of any outside organization who has a key to the building will be expected to read our policies and sign a Statement of Compliance.

### H.2 PROCEDURES FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. Training will be overseen by The Safe Church Committee and will consist of the most current resources, ELCA policies and procedures, and insurance company materials.
2. Training will be offered at the beginning of each church school semester, and at the start of employment for paid staff. It will be considered a mandatory part of volunteer training and employee orientation.
3. Once an individual has completed the training, a refresher workshop will be required every third year to ensure current and accurate knowledge.
4. The Safe Church Committee will maintain an up-to-date training record and a file of signed covenants.

### H.3 TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

	<b>Policies and Procedures</b>	<b>Safe Church Covenant</b>	<b>Child Abuse Awareness &amp; Mandated Reporting</b>
<b>Safe Church Committee</b>	X	X	X
<b>Ordained Staff</b>	X	X	X
<b>Director of Music</b>	X	X	X
<b>Christian Education Director</b>	X	X	X
<b>Youth Leaders</b>	X	X	X
<b>Sunday School Teachers</b>	X	X	X
<b>Sunday School Support Staff</b>	X	X	
<b>Nursery Supervisors</b>	X	X	X
<b>Stephen Ministers</b>	X	X	X
<b>Council Members</b>	X	X	
<b>Paid Staff</b>	X	X	
<b>Event Volunteers</b>	X	X	
<b>Key Holders</b>	X	X	
<b>Community Groups</b>	X	X	

## I SOURCES

Safe Church, Policies and Procedures, Central Congregational Church (United Church of Christ) One Worthen Street, PO Box 339, Chelmsford, Massachusetts, 01824, 978-256-5931, 5/18/2003

Policy for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 346 Shrewsbury Street, Holden, Massachusetts 01520, 508-829-4416

Safety Tips on a Sensitive Subject: Child Sexual Abuse, Church Mutual Insurance Company, 3000 Schuster Lane, PO Box 357, Merrill, WI 54452-0357, 800-554-2642, [www.churchmutual.com](http://www.churchmutual.com)

Safe Church, Policies and Procedures Manual, Evangelical Congregational Church of Westborough, Westborough, Massachusetts, 01581, 508-366-2000, 9/18/2003

## J FORMS

Application for Employment

Disclosure Form

Authorization to Request CORI

Statement of Compliance/Key Receipt Form

Safe Church Covenant

Event Trip Permission / Medical Release Form

Incident Report

Mandated Report

Sunday School Registration Card

## K APPENDIX

CORI Reader forms

## **Safe Church Organizing Committee**

**March 2, 2006 – May 31, 2007**

Laura Bailey

Elaine Rissmiller

Sue DeCosta

Yvonne Topping

Suzanne Gillam

Mark Wanda

Pat Olson

Karen Wolf

Pastor Eric Wefald