



Child Protection Policy

May 7, 2025

I. Purpose: This policy ensures the safety and well-being of all children participating in church activities, by outlining the procedures for preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect.

II. Scope: This policy applies to all staff, members, and volunteers who are working on behalf of St Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church (Hereby known as SPLC). This policy describes the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection:

SPLC affirms the need of all persons to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshiping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. Having said that, we want to protect children and youth who are the most vulnerable within our community of faith. No one should EVER experience abuse while in our care or when they are under our responsibility. All volunteers who work with children and youth at any function of SPLC must be active participants in the life and ministry of SPLC prior to volunteering.

As a congregation, we pledge to continue to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and you as well as all of the workers and volunteers within the congregation. We will follow all reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will train all of our workers and volunteers of all appropriate policies and methods of working with children, youth, and other adults (including working with our other ministries such as the Safety Ministry if an emergency situation were to arise); 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.

III. Definition of Abuse: Child abuse occurs when a parent, guardian, or caregiver (which can include church workers, Sunday School teachers, youth workers, etc.) mistreats or neglects a child, resulting in injury, significant emotional or physical harm, or serious risk of harm to the child.

It entails the betrayal of a caregiver's position of trust and authority over a child. It can take many different forms:

- Physical abuse (hitting, shaking, choking, biting, kicking, dangerous force or restraint, etc.)
- Sexual abuse (exposing a child to any sexual activity or behavior)
- Neglect (not providing what is essential to a child's emotional, psychological, and physical development)
- Emotional abuse (insulting, humiliating, rejecting, name-calling, intimidating, threatening)

Abuse happens in any age group, social status, or cultural group. It is vital that guidelines be put in place to prevent abuse and protect children and vulnerable individuals. Abusers are usually well-known to their victims and are often family members or close friends. The abuser initiates the abuse and is responsible no matter what the child does. Offenders will use many tactics to ensure the victim's silence, especially if the abuse is sexual. Children are told (usually bribed or threatened) to keep what happened a secret. In some cases, the offender will use physical force to keep the child from telling. They may be made to believe that the abuse is their fault. If the abuser is a family member, the child may be made to feel guilty about the abuse and fear that they will not be believed or fear the reaction of the person to whom they disclose.

IV. Prevention Measures: This congregation has adopted and implemented the following protocols to keep children and youth safe through the following:

1. Screening and Selection: All Church Personnel who WORK WITH OR AROUND CHILDREN OR YOUTH shall be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:
 - a. A STANDARD APPLICATION with reference checks completed by the applicant.
 - b. A BACKGROUND CHECK, this must be a countrywide background check with a sexual offender registry for every person, 18 or older, who works with our children and youth. This includes staff members and volunteers. All background checks will be filed and kept in a secure place. Background checks will be redone within a 3-year period.

- a. Only if that background check comes back clean (free from anything related to sexual offenses) shall the person be permitted to serve in any capacity with children or youth in the congregation's ministry. This includes teachers, leaders, and helpers of any kind. If the background check comes back with an offense, that person will be informed in writing that they may worship with us but will not be permitted to help with any of our children's ministries. The congregation council and Christian Education team will be informed of the letter if one is sent to a person stating that they cannot assist with children's ministry.
- b. An Individual Interview conducted by at least 2 ministry leaders, this may be the pastor, council president, youth director or another relevant party.
- c. DRIVING OR MOTOR VEHICLE RECORDS CHECK if the person may be transporting children or youth.

Those working with children and youth must have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept. This file must include the person's background check, driving/vehicle record as well as their application and release forms.

2. Training: Regular training sessions on child protection for all staff and volunteers, covering but not limited to the items listed under the section of this document titled, "TRAINING for Volunteers: Proper Procedures for Working with Children and Youth". These sessions must take place before serving and then be reviewed yearly. All volunteers and staff members shall receive a copy of these procedures before they are permitted to participate in Sunday School, the nursery, Vacation Bible School, or any youth events. This training is provided by a staff member of SPLC.

V. Event Protocols

1. All events having to do with children will be put on the church's master calendar. All of these events must be appropriately supervised by two adults aged 21 or more.
2. It is our standard practice that at all times SPLC follows the "2 deep" method for adult leaders who are supervising or teaching children as much as possible. Additionally, we have installed cameras in the interior of the building that record video and sound to a physical media card. These cameras can be viewed at any time using the black Amazon Fire Tablet and the Wyze App. If possible, the following ratios are recommended to be maintained at a minimum.

Child age	Ratio
0-2	1:2
2-Kindergarten	1:4
Kindergarten- 4 th grade	1:6
Youth at church	1:10
Youth outside church	1:7

3. Permission slips will be filled out for all events involving children that are away from the church property. Further, emergency phone numbers for parents, police, fire, and ambulance must be readily available during all events. *Permission slips may be obtained by any of the staff in the office and are tailored to the specific event.*
4. All children need to be picked up by their parent/guardian or someone who has been properly designated by the parent/guardian.
5. The use of photographs and names of children on our website will be at the discretion of the parent/guardian, and permission to do so must be obtained.

VI. Code of Conduct: Clear guidelines shall be given to all volunteers and staff regarding appropriate behavior and interactions with children. These guidelines include but are not limited to:

1. No person will be allowed to volunteer to work with children or youth until the person has been known to the clergy and congregation for at least six months.
2. Church Personnel are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.
3. Church Personnel will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socio-economic status. Church Personnel will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They will avoid even the appearance of favoritism.
4. Church Personnel are prohibited from 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.
5. When a medical or behavioral incident occurs an incident report form will be completed and kept on file for at least 3 years.

VII. Reporting Procedures:

1. **Mandatory Reporting:** All staff and volunteers are required to report any suspicions of child abuse or neglect to appropriate ministry leaders, this may be the pastor, council president, youth director, or another relevant party.
2. **Confidentiality:** Reports will be handled with the utmost confidentiality to protect the privacy of all parties involved.
3. **Response Plan:** Immediate action will be taken to ensure the safety of the child, including notifying the appropriate state authorities, and the Bishop's office of the North American Lutheran Church.
4. **South Carolina law** requires that clergy are mandated reporters of abuse. SC Act #94, as ratified in the 2003 legislative session, spells out the guidelines for mandatory reporting. The SC Dept of Social Services provides additional information on mandatory reporting.

<https://dss.sc.gov/child-well-being/mandated-reporters/>

VIII. Support for Victims:

1. **Counseling Services:** The congregation will assist victims and families to access counseling and support services when appropriate.
2. **Follow-Up:** The congregation will do regular follow-up to ensure the well-being of the victim and their family.

IX. Review and Compliance:

1. **Regular Reviews:** The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness.
2. **Compliance Monitoring:** Regular audits to ensure compliance with the policy.

TRAINING for Volunteers:

Proper Procedures for Working with Children and Youth

Avoiding Potentially Compromising Situations:

1. We adhere to the 2-leader rule. Always striving to have two non-related adults present when working with children and youth for the protection of the child and the adult as well. (False allegations can occur as well.) This includes counseling of a child and pastoral instruction therefore another adult, besides the pastor, must be present. If a child who needs help in the restroom must visit the restroom, two adults must accompany that child (if their parent or guardian is not available to assist them), while two adults remain with the group. This is to protect both the child and the adult leader. The group may be moved to the view of a camera if only one adult is available to stay with the group.
2. NEVER be alone with a child. At no time will children be left in an individual's care behind closed doors or in an isolated and private location. If there is a situation where only one adult leader is left in a room with no other adult, the door of that room ***must remain open, and both the adult and the child should move to be within view of one of our cameras.***
3. No one will be alone in the restroom with a child. This is an absolute restriction.
4. There are scheduled group bathroom breaks. If just one child must go to the restroom, the volunteer should escort the child. The volunteer should then remain outside the door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom. The volunteer should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.

Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised restroom and never go into a bathroom stall with a child and shut the door. If a bathroom accident should happen, for our own safety, two adults should be present during clean up and at least one adult should be of the same sex as the child.

5. Children must be signed IN AND OUT by an adult as we are responsible for who leaves with them.
6. When doing one-on-one counseling with a child or youth, do so in a public place. Never be alone with a child or youth. If possible, do so in view of a camera.
7. While it is best to have a second adult in a vehicle with you while you are transporting children and/or youth, we realize that sometimes the situation cannot be avoided. Church vehicles include dash cameras that record the inside of the vehicle. Text messaging or phone calls can be utilized to create timestamps and communications to show location, time, and route. This is for the safety

of the driver and passenger. We encourage parents to utilize apps such as Life360 and Find a Friend to monitor the child's location.

Proper Display of Affection:

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally-appropriate. The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love:

Appropriate Touch - Love and caring can be expressed in the following appropriate ways:

- Verbal praise
- Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully
- Taking a child's hand and leading him or her to an activity
- Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting.
- Taking both of the child's hands as you say, "You did such a good job!" (or "I'm so glad to see you. We've missed you!" etc.)
- Patting a child on the head, hand, shoulder or upper back to affirm him or her.
- Holding a child by the shoulders or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behavior.
- Gently holding a child's chin to help him or her focus on what you are saying.
- Holding a preschool child who is crying
- Holding hands while praying
- "High-fives" and hand slapping

Inappropriate Touch - You must avoid:

- Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling.
- Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child with toileting as outlined previously).
- Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.
- Being alone with a child.
- Prolonged physical contact.
- Seductiveness or suggestive contact.
- Wrestling and tickling
- Piggyback rides
- Any physical contact of any kind that is done for the pleasure or satisfaction of care providers.
- Any touching used to express power or control over a child.

Guidelines for Written Communication, Phone, and Digital Communication with Minors

Phone, texting, email, video conferencing, and social media communication can be a vital part of youth and family ministry work, but their improper use can produce serious consequences. Healthy boundaries and practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.

Phone

- The phone is not the preferred means of communicating with a minor.
- If you must communicate this way, each and every time you speak with a child or youth on the phone make sure the parent is in the room and aware you are having the conversation.

Email/Texting/Written Communication

- As much as possible, send mass emails/texts to communicate with minors.
- When the message is specific and not intended for the group, include another screened adult in the text or email. Including a parent is the first option. If that is not an option a member of the ministry team may be included.
- Written communication (whether by hand or typed and printed) between an adult and a minor is not appropriate. At no point should a written communication be given to a minor from an adult. Written Communication is defined as a note, invitation, drawing, or any other similar type communication.

Video Conferencing

- When video conferencing online through platforms such as Zoom, Teams or any other platform adhere to the 2-leader rule.
- If circumstances arise that this is not possible, record the session and save the recording.

Social Media

- Facebook, Instagram, and other forms of social media can be appropriate for engaging with children, youth, parents, and guardians. But just like other forms of communication, we must adhere to healthy boundaries and practices.

- Only “friend” a minor if you are also connected on that platform with their parent or guardian.
- When instant messaging with a child or youth adhere to the 2-leader rule.

A Message for Volunteers:

As volunteers, you are not expected to be experts in theological subtleties or to know the answer to every religious question. Your goal is simply to familiarize children and youth with the characters and events of Scripture; by introducing them to the way real people experienced a life with God.

We believe that when people experience the Scriptures, God actually works to create faith. And they come to know who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for them.

While some parts of volunteering may seem overwhelming, as followers of Christ we are here to instill the faith and then it is the Holy Spirit who will do the work of faith.

Acknowledgment of Policy

Signature of Trainer: _____

Signature of Staff Member or Volunteer: _____

Date: _____

The following samples are provided by the North American Lutheran Church. SPLC will work to create our own versions of these forms using the following as guides.

SPLC PERMISSION SLIP (These may be tailored for each specific event)

Name: _

Address: _

State: _

School: _ Male/Female Age: _

Birthday: _ Grade Finished: _

Parents/Guardians: _ Parent Home Phone: _ Parent Cell Phone: _

2nd Parent Cell Phone: _ Student Cell Phone: _

Parent E-mail: _ Student E-mail: _

Doctor: _ Phone: _

Health Insurance Provider & #: _

Allergies: _ Does your child carry an Epi-Pen?: _

Dietary Needs: _ Medications: _

Is your child able to administer these medications on his/her own?: _

Is there any activity you do not wish your child to participate in?: _

Any recent life experiences the staff should know about in order to better accommodate your child? (e.g., divorce, death in family – all information will be kept in confidence.)

In the event of an emergency, if I cannot be reached, the following person is hereby authorized to act on my behalf and know they may be contacted by a church staff or volunteer.

Name: _ Phone: _ Relationship to Child: _

- I give permission for _ to attend (name of event)
- I give permission for _ to be transported by a church staff or volunteer with a clean driving record.
- I authorize church staff or volunteer to administer Primary First Aid or Call Emergency Medical Services if deemed necessary. I also understand that I will be notified immediately if my child receives EMS care.
- I understand that my child's photograph (including audio visual images) may be used by _ church and or The North American Lutheran Church as a result of his/her attendance.

Signed: _ Parent/Guardian Date: _

SPLC INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Name of Church _____

Reason for report _____

Date of incident_____ Event_____

Name(s) and Age(s) of Minor(s)_____

Quote the child's first words verbatim:_____

Briefly describe what happened:_____

What action did you take?_____

Has the incident been resolved? _ yes _ no Explain:_____

Were there any witnesses? _ yes _ no Names:_____

Signature of witness (if present) _____

Report submitted to: _____

Signature of person completing report: _____

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
NURSERY INCIDENT FORM (already in use)

This form is to be completed by a member of staff when an incident or injury occurs.

Date _____ **Incident Location** _____

Incident Details _____

Individual(s) Notified: _____

Comments:

Signatures:

Nursery Attendant _____ **Date** _____

ORIGINAL: Nursery Binder

COPY TO: Pastor(s)

SPLC PERSONNEL APPLICATION FORM FOR MINISTRIES TO CHILDREN & YOUTH

Name of Church _____

The information you provide will be confidential. In our desire to reduce the risk of abuse within our church ministries, we believe this information is necessary to protect our children, our youth and our volunteers and to effectively place our volunteers in ministry positions. Thank you in advance for your partnership.

Personal Information

Full Name _____

Address _____

State _____ Email _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Personal History

Please provide information on your current employer or school, including names and addresses of employer/school, dates of your employment, your position or schooling level, and a contact person.

Hobbies, Interests or Skills _____

Spiritual History _____

How long have you attended (*name of church*) Lutheran Church? _____

If less than five years, did you attend somewhere prior? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, where? _____

Do you regularly attend (2 or more services a month)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you a member? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you been baptized? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you been confirmed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Declaration of Faith

Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Father's only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. The one who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. The one who descended into hell and that on the third day He rose again into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. And that He will come again to judge the living and the dead? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Information About Your Ability to Work with Children and Youth

List any gifts, training, education or other qualifications that have prepared you to minister with children or youth.

To provide a safe and secure environment for our church's children and youth, we believe it is necessary to include the following questions as part of our application process. All information will be kept confidential by church leadership and will not be disclosed by the church unless required by law. Answering yes to any of the questions may not necessarily prevent you from volunteering with the church. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

1. Are there any circumstances involving your lifestyle or history that could call into question your ability to work safely with children or youth in a Christian environment? (e.g. pornography, use of illegal substances, etc.)
2. Have you ever been convicted or found guilty of a criminal offence for which a pardon has not been granted? (Note: this does not include minor traffic violations) If yes, a conversation will happen with church leadership. ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Have you ever been expelled from or had your employment terminated by any organization or employer for assault or violence against any person, or for assault, violence or impropriety with children, youth or vulnerable persons? (e.g. senior citizens or people with disabilities) ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Have you been investigated by the Child Welfare Agency or any other organization for suspected child abuse? ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Have you ever been a defendant or respondent in a civil lawsuit or human rights complaint or other legal proceedings in which you were alleged to have abused or engaged in violence, harassment or other immoral or illegal behavior or conduct involving children, youth or vulnerable persons? ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Do you have any health concerns which would impact your ability to perform the functions of the volunteer position for which you are applying? (Please note that such health concerns may not prevent you from holding the position for which you have applied) ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Do you have any contagious diseases or conditions of which we should be aware, and which we may need to take steps to protect against transmission should you volunteer at the Church?
☐ Yes ☐ No

References: Please provide the names of three individuals, excluding relatives, who could provide a reference for you. Include at least one reference from outside the church.

Example: Name of Reference _ Home Phone _ Cell Phone _

How long have you known this person: _ Address _

Nature of Relationship:

Information received is confidential and is being gathered for the purposes of considering your application for volunteer ministry with the Church and for determining what, if any Church ministries, you may be suited for in future.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION AND DECLARATION OF INTENT

I hereby give the church consent to verify the information provided by me in this Ministry Personnel Application Form and to contact the references and current and former employers listed above and to obtain and verify any information from them (and any other persons that the Church determines might be able to provide relevant information) that may be relevant to my application.

I will provide the church with a current countrywide background check with sexual offender registry prior to volunteering. I further grant the church permission to perform an internet search on me and to review and consider any information found by me on the Internet.

I understand that if the church approves my volunteer application and later determines, in its discretion, at any time that I am not suitable for volunteer service in the church or for the volunteer position for which I am applying, the church may terminate my volunteer service or volunteer position for any reason without advance notice.

If the church approves my application for a volunteer position, I will sign any documents that the church requires and will at all times cooperate fully with the staff of the church in the fulfillment of my duties and will keep all confidential information I encounter in my role as a volunteer confidential.

If at any time I determine that for any reason I am unable to support or adhere to or follow the policies, procedures or the doctrine of the North American Lutheran Church, I will inform the church and will resign my volunteer position.

I understand that my photograph and/or audio-visual images may be used by St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran and or The North American Lutheran Church as a result of my volunteer position.

I hereby acknowledge that, to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this Ministry Personnel Application Form is true and correct.

Signature of Applicant _

Printed Name _

Date _

Signature of Witness _

Printed Name _

Date _