

Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church **Policy for Creating a Safe Community**

Adopted, April 16, 2013, by the Church Council of
Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church



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Commitment to Safe Community

In recognition of the spiritual and public trust given to this faith community, Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (otherwise known as CGS) is committed to being a true safe community, both nurturing and protecting its members and visitors. Abuse and harassment are, therefore, violations of the faith shared by this congregation. Accordingly, the congregation will maintain official policies and procedures which assure prevention of instances of abuse, appropriate intervention into alleged incidents of abusive behavior, and care for all involved. These procedures will be reviewed by the Church Council annually to correspond to changes in civil law and the community.

In envisioning how we might live out our vision of safe community, we determined that:

- All people need to feel safe in all church activities.*
- Children can grow in faith and know God only if they are physically and emotionally safe at church.*
- Parents need to feel assured of their children's safety in all church activities, and of the church's commitment to provide for their children's safety, in order to focus on worship and their own spiritual growth.*
- Staff and volunteers need to be equipped, protected, supported and accountable as they lead and nurture our children.*

Background

Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (CGS) has worked to develop the policies and procedures to keep our congregation a safe sanctuary for our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Fortunately, our work was not initiated in response to problems within our congregation, but was prompted by an awareness of situations arising in other churches where it did not provide as safe a sanctuary as it could have. The advice of expert authors of the Church Law and Tax Report, among others, has shaped our response and assured us that measures designed to protect our children, youth and vulnerable adults may also help protect our congregation from unfounded charges and legal liability. These policies and procedures are designed to enhance our service to Christ. This goal of keeping our congregation safe for children and vulnerable adults will direct our implementation and future modification of these policies and procedures.

Leading social service agencies in our society have taken similar steps with good results. The experience of other congregations which have adopted similar policies has been positive. We of CGS are motivated because we are entrusted with the spiritual, educational and moral development of our children and youth, and with ensuring a safe spiritual and educational environment for our vulnerable adults.

Intent of this Policy

The policy is intended solely for the use of CGS in performing its functions as a religious body. It is written with an intent to focus on the safety needs of our protected groups, children and vulnerable adults, as well as all members and visitors of our church. It reflects the church's best intentions, and may be interpreted and applied compassionately in accordance with the theological and biblical principles of the Gospel and our service to Christ.

It is not a contract, agreement, promise, or undertaking by the Church to do or refrain from doing anything. It is not intended that the policy be imposed as rigid law, binding the Church or others. Any actions or decisions by the Church in connection with the policy are to be undertaken at the Church's sole discretion, in accordance with the theology and ecclesiology of the ELCA and in the exercise of CGS's constitutional rights as a religious body.

The Safe Community Policy was developed for the child/youth and vulnerable adult programs of CGS (as well as for all CGS members). It does not extend to Carden School, which rents from CGS but is not affiliated with CGS; nor does it extend to other non-affiliated groups that rent CGS facilities.

Creating a Safe Church Community for our Children

We have developed a fourfold strategy to help ensure that the children entrusted to us are safe at CGS, that parents are assured of their safety, and that adults who work with them are equipped, protected, supported, and held accountable. Since our staff and volunteers are often in situations where they are working and talking with youth, they may be the first ones to recognize a problem or concern facing a child. Our policy, therefore, is designed not only to protect families but also to provide our volunteers and staff with resources to help them report suspected abuse. As appropriate these strategies also extend to our procedures for ensuring a safe environment for our vulnerable adults.

Our strategy involves a plan for:

- Worker Selection
- Worker training, including Standards of Behavior
- Reporting of suspected abuse
- Record Keeping

Personnel Procedures

Worker Selection: We Want to Make Sure This Is a Good Match

In order to minimize the risk of child abuse at CGS by volunteer and paid workers during church attendance and church-sponsored activities, all who work on behalf of CGS with any children and/or youth under the age of 18, will be properly selected, screened, trained, and supervised in safe community procedures and expectations. Our selection process is designed to honor our commitment to helping people discover their God-given gifts and apply them to God's service. This may include youth under the age of 18 who work with younger youth or children.

The reporting structure for personnel involved in direct contact with children and youth will be as follows:

Pastor—

Sunday School Director, Music Director, Administrative Assistant

Sunday School Director—

Supervise, under the direction of the pastor, nursery attendant, Sunday school teaching volunteers, Sunday school assistant, youth program volunteers, and VBS volunteers

Music Director—

Supervision responsibilities depend on job description

Screening Procedures for Primary Workers (see definitions in appendix)

Screening procedures for primary workers are established for workers who, in the normal course of their duties, are expected to be alone for any period of time with one or more children, or work in a supervisory capacity on our church grounds and offsite church related activities. This includes, but is not limited to, all paid staff, pastor(s), administrative assistants, Sunday School and confirmation leaders and teachers, drama/dance/choir/music teachers, nursery staff, and volunteers.

When selecting child/youth workers, we cannot guarantee that an individual will be an effective and safe youth leader, but the selection process helps us gather information to make an informed decision. Therefore, we ask that:

-Ideally, volunteers should be actively involved in the congregation before applying for a position in which they are expected to be alone for any period of time with one or more children.

-Volunteers and staff complete the Child/Youth Worker Application form and complete a satisfactory **background** check, before beginning work with children or youth.

-Potential child and youth workers provide two references who are acquainted with the applicant's work with children and youth.

-The direct supervisor of the program area in which the applicant has interest may conduct an interview with the potential worker.

-Volunteers and staff, age 18 and over, participating in CGS's child or youth ministries shall be checked through the appropriate Department of Justice agency for convictions of sexual or physical abuse, felony drug convictions, crimes related to the sale of drugs or controlled substances, crimes related to illegal use, sale or possession of firearms, and felony convictions for violent crimes. No one will be accepted who has had a criminal sexual or physical abuse violation or conviction. All information will be kept in strict confidence. See **Record Keeping** for rules regarding record access and security.

Supervision of Secondary Workers (see definitions in appendix)

Secondary Workers may be volunteers aged 12-17.99 years of age. Secondary workers who are minors must always be directly supervised by a primary worker. These workers should not be alone with children/youth during CGS-sponsored activities.

Screening Procedures for Secondary Workers

-Potential workers complete the Child/Youth Worker Registration forms.

-The direct supervisor of the program area in which the applicant has interest may conduct an interview with the potential worker.

Supervising Child and Youth Workers

The two-adult rule is our goal when working with children and youth. Situations in which an adult is completely alone with one or more children are to be avoided.

-During Sunday School, Confirmation, mid-week programs, Bible Study, etc., an adult present in a supervisory role, checking into class and meeting rooms, serves as a second adult.

Procedures for Primary and Secondary CGS Workers

Minimum Age/Supervision Requirements for Church Workers:

	Supervising	Helping
Infant - Elementary	Primary (25+ years)	Secondary (12 years or older)
6th grade - 12th grade	Primary (25+ years)	Primary (18+ years)

A minimum of two (2) years of age difference must be maintained between Primary Church Worker and child/youth.

Recommended Supervision Ratios:

Infants	(ages 0-12 months)	3 to 1 church worker
Toddlers	(12-35 months)	5 to 1 church worker
Preschool	(3-5 year olds)	7 to 1 church worker
School age	(5-18 year olds)	12 to 1 church worker

Informal Contact (Independent of Church Activities)

Informal contact refers to phone calls, text messaging, letters, social networking (i.e., Facebook), face to face contact between a church worker and a minor that is not connected to official church activities. The church recognizes that informal contact between church workers and youth frequently occurs. However, the church worker should seek written permission of parents before having informal contact with CGS youth. The church worker should clearly let the parent know the nature of the contact and that it is not part of church activity. Any planned, individual, face to face contact should occur only in a public place. Parents are responsible for monitoring this informal contact. Emails by church workers to minors should have a standard practice of copying the parents, the pastor, and the Sunday school director. If the parent cannot read email for any reason, it is imperative that emails be copied as specified above: pastor, Sunday School Director. The Church Worker should preferably call the parent first, then ask to speak to the minor after informing the parent of the nature of the call, rather than emailing a child whose parent cannot read the email.

Visibility

All church activities with children should be easily visible and should demonstrate modeling of nurturing and respectful behavior at all times. All rooms used as gathering places for children and youth will be centrally located and visually accessible so that Church Workers are easily observable by other adults and so that there is no isolation or secrecy.

CGS may utilize classroom space that is adjacent to the garden. When using these classrooms, two church workers (one of whom is a primary worker) should be present at all times in the classroom, and the classroom door should be left open. The classrooms CGS has elected to make available to Sunday School and youth have doors that open directly into the main garden. They also have an adjacent bathroom for children's use. Children may easily walk from the classroom into the narthex or Great Hall, and parents/guardians may have constant access to the rooms in which the children may have an activity.

Large scale activities of CGS children will occur in the narthex, the sanctuary, the garden or the Great Hall, under most circumstances.

When children or youth are present, windows may not be covered and doors may not be blocked. If there is no window in the meeting room, the door should remain open.

Open Door Policy

All events involving children and youth should be open such that parents, care givers, the ushers, and church workers who are appropriately screened for work with youth are always welcome to attend classes, rehearsals, practices, programs, meetings and events.

Training Staff and Volunteers Who Work with Children and Youth (and as appropriate, with vulnerable adults)

Volunteers and staff who have been accepted to work with youth (and in some instances vulnerable adults) in a primary capacity will receive training that includes:

- A description of the background of the Safe Community Policy and why churches need to be involved.
- A description of CGS's Safe Church Community Policy, including the procedure defined for reporting suspected abuse.
- An explanation of the expectations of persons who work with children and youth, and vulnerable adults.
- Basic information about child abuse and neglect so that these persons can understand the issues and be alert to signs of abuse in the children and youth with whom they work.

Primary and secondary workers must attend at least one training session on safe community policies and procedures at least once every two years.

Expectations of Volunteers and Staff

Each volunteer or staff member working with youth at CGS is expected to

- Be a role model for children/youth;
- Organize meaningful experiences;
- Be alert to signs of potential child abuse or neglect;
- Adhere to the specific guidelines developed for his/her position.

In addition to the above expectations, CGS has developed Standards of Behavior for all individuals working with children and youth on behalf of the church. The standards are designed to protect children, youth, adults, families, and the church.

Standards of Behavior

A. Positive Behavior

Discipline used in church activities should be positive, respectful, and caring. Physical punishment and emotional abuse are not permitted. Volunteers and staff should be alert to the physical and emotional health of the children and youth with whom they work.

B. Open Door Policy

Staff and volunteers should work with youth in reasonably open places where others are welcome to enter – not behind closed or locked doors. Parents and guardians are always welcome to attend classes, rehearsals, practices, programs, meetings, and events.

C. Transportation:

Transportation to and from events is the responsibility of the families. In exceptional circumstances, a vetted CGS primary child worker (paid or volunteer) may provide transportation. CGS has specific permission slips for parents to complete, proof of current driver's license and proof of insurance forms, and mandatory Safe Community policy training for these authorized drivers.

D. Respect of Privacy

Adult leaders and staff need to respect the privacy of minors and intrude only insofar as health and safety require. Situations requiring privacy include using rest rooms, changing clothes and taking showers. Adults need to protect their own privacy in similar situation. Unforeseen circumstances may require an adult leader or staff to contact the parent or guardian to alert them of an issue. For example, the adult leader would stand outside the bathroom while the child is in there. If the child needs help in the bathroom, the parent should be contacted to help the child.

E. Overnight Accommodations

A minimum of two adult leaders should be present at any overnight activity. If youth participants include males and female, ideally the adult leaders would be males and

females. If this condition cannot be met, the event will proceed only upon approval of the direct supervisor who would need to be a primary worker of CGS. When minors and adults must share a tent, bedroom, or hotel room for the sake of safety and/or cost-efficiency, parents will be informed prior to the commencement of the activity. All adults sharing a room or tent must be of the same gender as the children occupying the tent/room. An adult shall not occupy the same bed as a minor.

F. Housing

When private homes are used for overnight events, the program staff member will make final approval of all adults involved as hosts, hostesses, and chaperones. At least two youth will be assigned to each home.

G. Sexual Activity

No sexual activity is permitted between adults and minors. Sexual comments or jokes, the showing of sexual material, the exposure of sexual parts of the minor's body and/or the adult's body or other sexual behaviors is strictly prohibited.

H. Tobacco and Alcohol

While supervising children and youth on behalf of CGS, adult leaders and staff will refrain from the use of tobacco and alcohol. When driving children and youth on behalf of the church, adults will not be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or prescription or non-prescription medications that could impair the ability to drive safely.

I. Illegal Substances and Firearms

The use or possession of illegal substances and/or firearms while supervising children on behalf of CGS is strictly prohibited.

Reporting Suspected Abuse

What is Abuse:

There are four types of child abuse.

-**Physical abuse** is the deliberate physical injuring of a child.

-**Sexual abuse** is the involvement of a child in any sexual act or situation for the gratification or benefit of another.

-**Emotional abuse** is maltreatment which causes low self-esteem in a child, undue fear or anxiety, or other damage to a child's well-being caused by such acts as angry fault finding, humiliating and belittling a child for mistakes or failures, and deliberate inattention to a child's emotional needs.

-**Neglect** is not providing food, clothing, shelter, health care, psychological nurturing, education, supervision, or other basic necessities.

Procedures for Reporting Suspected Abuse

According to California's Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/PUB132.pdf> only specially trained individuals, including "child care custodians," are required to report suspected child abuse.

Because volunteers are not child care custodians as defined in the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, volunteers are not mandated reporters.

However, any individual who has reason to suspect abuse, or is aware of a potentially unsafe condition that could lead to abuse, should immediately report that information to any of the following: the Pastor or the Sunday School Director. The individual may be asked to complete a written report describing the basis for his or her concern. Any individual may also contact Child Protective Services (CPS) or Adult Protective Services (APS) directly for advice or to report something. However, in order to ensure that the church is aware of safety concerns, it is most important that the Pastor or Sunday School Director be informed of the situation or concern immediately.

A review of the reported abuse or potentially unsafe condition will be immediately conducted by the following: the Pastor, the direct supervisor of the area of ministry, the staff member to whom the report was initially made (if not one of the above), or other council member designated by the Council President. These individuals may consult with others, including legal counsel, as needed. If warranted, a report will be made to CPS or APS and/or other legal agency as required by law. The outcome of their decision will be documented and kept in a locked file in the Pastor's office.

A mandated reporter must make a report whenever, in his/her professional capacity or within the scope of his/her employment, he/she has knowledge of, or observes a child (a person under 18) whom the mandated reporter knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse or neglect. (Note Penal Code 11166). Mandated reporters must also make a report as indicated above, regarding abuse of a vulnerable adult.

CPS and APS have very specific procedures that must be followed (note: www.sccgov.org – information for mandated reporters).

Phone Numbers:

Child Protective Services (CPS) (408) 299-2071 (San Jose Area); (408) 683-0601 (Morgan Hill/Gilroy Area); (650) 493-0601 (Palo Alto Area); 911 for life threatening emergencies

Adult Protective Services (APS) (408) 755-7690; 1-800-414-2002; 911 for life threatening emergencies

Record Keeping

The following materials will be kept on file for all persons covered by the Safe Church Community Policy:

- Child/Youth Worker Registration forms, including documentation of interview and references, if applicable.
- Documentation of training for primary workers and secondary workers.
- Results of background checks (maintained only as per federal and state regulations).

Security of Records

Records on child/youth workers will be kept in a locked file in the church pastor's office. They will be available only to direct supervisors of the program on a need-to-know basis, upon approval of the pastor. Access is only with the permission of the Pastor, who is the "Custodian of Records."

Responsibility for Maintaining Records

Direct Supervisor of Program Areas-

Each direct supervisor of program areas covered by the Safe Church Community Policy will do the following:

- For each child/youth worker under his or her supervision, collect and compile the materials to be kept on file (with the exception of results of the background check) and give these to the Custodian of Records for filing.
- When requested, provide the Executive Committee with a list of all child/youth workers under his or her supervision.

Policy Compliance

The Council President will conduct an annual audit on or before February 15th to ensure that all responsible personnel are compliant with the policy.

Questions and Answers

People Covered

Who should go through the Safe Church Community Program?

All adults and youth who work with children and youth on an ongoing basis should take part in the program. These individuals are defined as Primary and Secondary workers. In some instances, Primary and Secondary workers who are involved in leading activities involving vulnerable adults, may also be required to participate in the program.

What about the one-time volunteer?

People do not usually need to go through the process if: (1) they are working with youth and children on a one time basis, and (2) a staff member or volunteer who has gone through the process is also present. Volunteers who have not gone through the Safe Church Community program should not be put in situations where they will work alone with children and without supervision.

What if volunteers or staff say they have had background checks and/or youth protection training as part of their jobs or experience in other programs?

Results of background check are confidential. Therefore, they cannot be shared among agencies. The potential worker must authorize another background check for his/her work at CGS. Because training is tailored to the specific needs of CGS, all affected workers will be required to attend at least one training session every two years.

The Process

Why do we have to do a Background Check on volunteers?

We require the Background Check because it provides essential information about the applicant's background. We also require it because it protects the congregation. Here's how.

- It's easy – it takes only a moment of the volunteer's time to authorize the background check.
- Requiring a Background Check is a powerful deterrent to the career abuser.
- Career abusers look for places where they can have easy access to children (or possibly vulnerable adults). With so many other community organizations doing careful screening, churches without screening policies may be at an increased risk.

How much time should we give staff/volunteers to complete the program?

Ideally, individuals would not work with children until the training and their records have been received and assessed. Initial safe community training may be an individual meeting with the Pastor or the Sunday School Director to discuss safe church procedures. No worker will be allowed to work unsupervised with youth/children until they have completed the background check. Attendance at an approved training session/meeting must also occur within six months of the time they begin their work or more frequently as necessary. Failure to complete the program after two reminders will require the volunteer or staff member (primary or secondary) to cease their participation in youth and child activities.

A master list of training completed will be maintained the Church office.

The CGS Safe Community Policy has been adapted in large part from the Advent Lutheran Church, Morgan Hill, Safe Community Policy. It is also developed with input provided during training sessions conducted by Dr. Kibbe Ruth, including a review of some of her documents provided on her website www.kyros.org.

The process for development included review by church clergy, staff, parents, the Christian Education Committee, the Church Council, an attorney, and our insurance company.

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The Safe Community Policy was developed primarily for the child/youth ministry programs of Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, not including Carden school.

Appendix A: Definitions used in Policy

Definitions Used in Policy

Clergy: pastor of the church

Staff: paid employee of the church

Volunteers: individuals who of their own free will offer to serve in a ministry of the church without monetary compensation

Minors: any child from infancy to eleven years of age, and any youth twelve through seventeen years of age

Adults: an individual who is 18 years or older

Vulnerable Adults: any person 18 years or older with diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities (in California anyone 65 or older is also considered vulnerable)

Child Protective Services (CPS): The name of a governmental agency in many states of the United States that responds to reports of child abuse or neglect.

Adult Protective Services (APS): Adult Protective Services are social services provided to abused, neglected, or exploited older and/or disabled adults. It is typically administered by local or state health, aging, or regulatory departments.

Church Worker (for the purpose of this policy): All who work on behalf of Christ the Good Shepherd Church with any children, youth or vulnerable adults.

Church Worker Categories:

--Primary Church Worker: Church workers who are primarily responsible for or regularly working with minors or vulnerable adults. Any church worker who, in the course of their ministry, might be alone with a minor or vulnerable adult from the congregation. (This includes, but is not limited to, all paid staff, pastors, associates in ministry, administrative assistants, secretaries, directors of Christian education, family ministry, youth workers and directors, Sunday school and confirmation leaders and teachers, nursery workers, choir directors, custodial workers and congregational council members.

--Secondary Church Worker: church workers 12-17.99 years of age. Church workers over the age of eighteen years of age who are not primarily responsible for or regularly working with minors.

Church Activity: Any church-related event, gathering, or occasion which is sponsored or advertised by ministries of the church. "Church activity" may be off-campus, even in another country.

Types of Abuse:

Physical abuse: The deliberate, non-accidental physical injury of or causing pain to a minor or adult.

Emotional Abuse: Maltreatment of a minor or vulnerable adult that elicits low self esteem, undue fear, anxiety, shame or other damage to a person's well-being caused by such acts as angry fault finding, humiliating and/or belittling a person for mistakes or failures, and deliberate inattention to someone's emotional needs.

Financial Abuse: Taking advantage of the vulnerability of an adult by deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of the person's belongings or funds.

Sexual Harassment: Unwanted and unwelcome visual, verbal or physical conduct that is sex-based or of sexual nature; requests for sexual favors; or offensive third-party conduct to which the victim is subjected.

Other Harassment: Other forms of harassment include discrimination, exploitation or intimidation based on race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or physical ability.