

Child Protection Policy

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 Emmanuel Lutheran Church. This policy describes the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection:

1. Emmanuel Lutheran Church affirms the need of all persons to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church.
3. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who worship with us, including those who may have serious personal troubles.
4. We are committed to protecting children and youth, among our most vulnerable, within this congregation.
5. No one should experience abuse while in our care or when they are under our responsibility.

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 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)

IV. Warnings about Abusers: Abuse may happen in any age group, social status, or cultural group. 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.

V. Prevention Measures: This congregation has adopted and implemented these protocols.

1. Screening and Selection. All those working with or around children shall be cleared through the following method:
 - a. Any and all necessary requirements by state or federal law (mandatory reporting, FBI background check, etc.)
 - b. Other considerations may include the following:
 - i. The length of membership at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
 - ii. The maturity, competence, and gifts with which one has or does not have towards ministry with children
 - iii. Interviews with the pastor and/or relevant committees
 - iv. References from previous places of employment, volunteering, or other persons
2. Training. Church Personnel may be required to participate in trainings, which may include these topics: Prayer, Discipleship, and Child Protection, on an annual basis at the discretion of the Council.

VI. Event Protocols:

1. Any events for which a parent, legal guardian, or custodian for every child is not present shall normally have two (or more) unrelated adult Church Personnel present.
2. Unless directed otherwise by the Council, these events shall follow the ratios as set by the state of Pennsylvania.*

VII. Code of Conduct: Regardless of membership status, all Church Personnel shall follow conduct becoming of a Christian in the North American Lutheran Church. Such conduct includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Faith in Jesus Christ
2. Growth and modeling of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, especially including patience
3. Keeping the Ten Commandments
4. Affirming Emmanuel Lutheran Church's and the North American Lutheran Church's positions on social and gospel issues (1) a. Or, in matters of conscience, a minimum of not openly contradicting Emmanuel Lutheran Church's positions
5. Rejecting the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, and the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.
6. Rejecting all things of sexually immoral or pornographic natures.

VIII. Reporting Procedures:

1. **Mandatory Reporting:** All staff and volunteers are required to report any suspicions of child abuse or neglect to appropriate ministry leaders, which shall be defined as the Pastor, the Council President, and any members of the Executive Committee.
2. **Confidentiality:** Reports will be handled with the appropriate confidentiality. For example, such reports may need to be handed over to police authorities.
3. **Response Plan:** Appropriate action will be taken to ensure the safety of the child, including notifying the appropriate state authorities and the Bishop's office.

IX. Review and Compliance:

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

*See ratios [here](#)