

“Precious in God’s Sight”
(Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Safety Policy)

***Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God
with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’
This is the first and greatest commandment.
And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.
All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.***

Matthew 22:37-40

I. Introduction

Statement of belief and intent:

We recognize that abuse has become a serious problem in our society and in many churches. Such abuse can cause deep and life-long pain, and when it occurs within the church it can damage the abused one’s perception of and trust in God, devastate families, and divide congregations.

Following the example of Jesus, when used thoughtfully and appropriately, touch can nurture and encourage and be a way to show God’s love to one another.

In order to be faithful to Christ’s call to “love one another”, congregations must be pro-active in providing loving and safe environments for children/youth and vulnerable adults. It is our intent at Prince of Peace to implement and enforce the following policy in order to:

1. Reduce the risk of child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse occurring during Prince of Peace activities.
2. Protect church staff and volunteer workers from potential allegations of abuse.
3. Limit the extent of Prince of Peace’s legal risk and liability due to child or vulnerable adult abuse.

By doing so, we believe that Prince of Peace can continue to be a place where children, youth and vulnerable adults can come together, learn and grow in faith, and experience God’s grace and love together.

For the purpose of this policy:

Child or Youth is anyone under the age of 18

Vulnerable adult: Any person aged 18 or older who has a physical or mental disability, advanced age, lives in a facility, homebound or receives certain licensed services.

II. Worker Selection

1. Volunteers shall be permitted to teach or supervise children/youth/vulnerable adults after such volunteers have been active participants (regularly attending worship and church activities) of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church for three months. This procedure will disallow persons who seek immediate access to children or vulnerable adults. One exception to this policy will be for youth mentoring, in which the parent has had a conversation with the CYF director to choose a family member/family friend to serve as a mentor. This person will be required to fill out the application, attend the safety training course and pass a background check. The other exception is when a trusted adult is invited as a chaperone for a youth event or trip. This person shall be required to fill out an application, attend the safety training course and pass a background check.

All volunteers must be trained in "Precious in God's Sight", truthfully complete, date and submit the application which must include at least one Prince of Peace staff recommendation. Applicants must complete, date and sign an "Authorization for Background Check." Prince of Peace Lutheran Church may request a background record check to determine whether the applicant is the subject of any reported conviction for background check crimes, under the provisions of the Child Protection Background Check Act, Minnesota Statute Sec. 299 C.60 to 299C.64 and amendments thereto. A Release/Acknowledgement Form must be completed, dated, signed and returned.

2. The failure to complete, date and sign these documents or any other document necessary to process the authorization will be considered as a withdrawal of the application for the position under consideration.
3. A record of signed and dated documents and any response from the background check shall be maintained for each applicant in a confidential file, designated by the Pastor.
4. Volunteering on overnight activities will require a criminal background check prior to the activity. Please allow a minimum of two weeks for this to be completed. Because background check authorizations are valid for three years only, volunteers will be required to sign a new background check authorization form as needed.
5. Only authorized representatives, approved by the Pastor may review the information contained in the response to the background record check.

III. Worker Supervision-CHILDREN and YOUTH

1. All activities involving children and youth will follow the **Two Adult Rule**. The **Two Adult Rule** states that there must be a minimum of two adults participating in activities involving children and youth. The minimum suggested ratio of adults to children/youth is one adult for every ten children, always maintaining a minimum of two adults. A roaming supervisor is a way to meet this rule. An exception to the **Two Adult Rule** may be made when transporting children in a personal vehicle; however, whenever in a vehicle alone with a child or youth, the child or youth **MUST** sit in the back seat.
2. One-to-one contact with children or youth in a closed door environment is not permitted.

This type of contact should take place in an open environment that is visible to persons passing by.

3. The church recognizes that one-to-one contact may be appropriate at times to maintain confidentiality. When this type of activity is appropriate, it is recommended that a second adult be made aware of this activity and be available if needed. A room with a door that has a window must be used.
4. Children and youth should have written parental permission for involvement in church sponsored programs or activities.
5. Church nursery procedures must clearly identify the child and the child's parent or guardian. Children should be released to a properly identified and pre-authorized adult.
6. Random and frequent supervisory visits will be made to all classrooms, especially rooms that are isolated from view. When a staff or volunteer are working with children or youth in a classroom setting, the door must remain open.
7. Supervision of children will be maintained before and after all events until all children and youth are in the custody of parents or guardians. The Two Adult Rule must be followed until all children and youth have left the premises.
8. In order to prevent the occurrence of questionable behavior, adult co-workers are encouraged to create and maintain a spirit of cooperation and mutual support. If questionable behavior is observed, it should be addressed and, if appropriate, be reported. (See Section V)
9. All activities involving children and youth will have a Prince of Peace staff person and/or a "designated supervisor" of the activity on site and known to all volunteers present.

Designated supervisors/volunteers can be from 2 different categories.

Level 1: any adult teaching or working with children or youth in a small group or individual conversations (teaching, mentoring, etc.). These persons shall be background checked according to POP policy. Any activity happening at POP without other POP activities happening in the building must have a Level 1 adult.

Level 2: any adult in attending an event as an adult supervisor. These adults must have completed the safety education class according to POP, but do not have to be background checked.

All activities must have a Level 1 adult present to complete the Two Adult Rule.

Settings that allow for a Level 2 adult as the 2nd adult in addition to staff: public activities when other adults and community are also present. POP activities, only when additional activities with other adults are present in the building.

The 1 adult to 10 children minimum ratio must always be followed regardless of the category of the designated supervisor. Regardless of event size, the **Two Adult Rule** always applies.

IV. Vulnerable Adults

1. A Pastoral relationship is (1) between a Pastor and any person to whom the Pastor provides or has provided counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction, or spiritual guidance, or (2) between a lay minister and any person whom the lay minister has received sensitive, personal or confidential information in the course of offering ministry.
2. The safety of all persons and healthy boundaries are essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a private home or residential facility. Avoid situations that might compromise privacy. When only one person visits an adult household, they must have documentation of time, duration of visit, general matters discussed. Volunteer will provide this information to the pastor and care team chair person. Any pastoral concerns shall be provided to the Pastor or Chairperson of the Care Team as soon as possible after the visit. Confidentiality among clergy and lay ministers is required and all documentation is kept confidential. This documentation promotes continuity of care and transparency in ministry.
3. One-to-one interaction with a vulnerable adult in a closed door environment is discouraged. These types of interactions should take place in an open environment that is visible to persons passing by.
4. While not required, it is best practice for those ministering to vulnerable adults in private homes or residential facilities, to do so with another trained adult lay minister present. Those engaged in such ministries should minister in pairs.

V. Reporting

1. Reporting is another way to reflect our caring for children/youth/vulnerable adults. Prince of Peace staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical signs of sexual and other forms of abuse, as well as to the behavioral and verbal signs that may be exhibited. Abused children/youth/vulnerable adults may:
 - * seem unduly afraid of their parents/caregivers.
 - * often have welts, bruises, untreated sores, or other injuries.
 - * have injuries which seem to be inadequately treated.
 - * show evidence of poor overall care.
 - * exhibit behavioral extremes. For example: crying often or crying very little and showing no real expectation of being comforted; being excessively fearful, or seemingly fearless of adult authority; being unusually aggressive and destructive, or extremely passive and withdrawn.
 - * be wary of physical contact, especially when it is initiated by an adult, or become

apprehensive when an adult approaches another child, particularly one who is crying. Others are inappropriately hungry for affection, yet may have difficulty relating to children and adults. Based on their past experiences, these individuals cannot risk getting too close to others.

- * exhibit a sudden change in behavior. For example: displaying regressive behavior - pants wetting, thumb sucking, frequent whining, becoming disruptive or becoming uncommonly shy and passive; withdrawal from family and friends.

While no one indicator is proof that an individual is being abused, these may be warning signs. A volunteer who has noticed these warning signs shall discuss them with Prince of Peace staff or the designated supervisor of the activity.

The volunteer, in consultation with the Prince of Peace staff person (who is a mandated reporter) will work together to make a decision whether or not a formal abuse report shall be made. If a pattern of injuries or behaviors are observed by a volunteer or Prince of Peace staff person, appropriate documentation will be written and a decision made whether or not the need for a formal abuse report is indicated.

2. Any volunteer who witnesses an abusive situation or receives written or verbal information is required by this policy to report that information immediately to the Prince of Peace staff person responsible for the program.
3. **All reports of known or reasonably suspected abuse shall be documented in writing.** See "REPORT OF CHILD/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE." The person aware of the suspected abuse will complete the form. The Prince of Peace staff person will support the volunteer writing the report and will take responsibility for notifying the Pastor.
4. Members of the clergy and paid staff working with children/youth/vulnerable adults are mandated to report such allegations to the local authorities verbally within 24 hours and in written form within 72 hours.
5. Anyone who is required to report and fails to do so is guilty of a misdemeanor.
6. Anyone who makes a report in good faith is immune from any civil liability.
7. If there is uncertainty whether or not a situation should be reported, call the Hennepin County Social Service staff. These numbers can be found posted in the office or by calling Directory Assistance. The situation may be discussed without releasing any names or personal information. The protection staff will assist the caller in deciding if a report should be made.

V. Responding to Allegations of Abuse

1. The Pastor or his/her designee shall maintain up-to-date, accessible files of all records of workers' applications, references and screening forms. These files will be accessible to

the Pastor, his/her designee, and county or law enforcement officials.

After a report has been made:

2. The Pastor, or his/her designee, shall be the specific spokesperson for Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. This person shall address the media and congregation regarding the allegation of abuse. Care for the privacy and confidentiality of all involved shall be safeguarded.
3. The Pastor or his/her designee shall document in writing all efforts in handling the allegation of abuse.
4. The Pastor or his/her designee shall report the allegation of abuse to Prince of Peace's insurance company, church attorney, and synod officials.
5. An in-depth investigation shall be left to county or state professionals who are familiar with these cases.
6. The Pastor or his/her designee shall take all allegations seriously, and shall notify the parents of the alleged victim (while maintaining the confidentiality of the alleged perpetrator). The exception to this would be when such notification is prohibited by law (e.g. when the accused is a family member of the victim or living with a family member). Pastoral support will be given to the alleged victim and victim's family.
7. The Pastor or his/her designee shall treat the accused with dignity and support. Whether the accused is a staff person or a volunteer, that person shall be prevented from having further contact with children/youth/vulnerable adults at Prince of Peace until the investigation is completed. Any disciplinary action toward staff members will be in accordance with church policy.
8. If the accused is the Pastor, the Council President and Executive Team shall fulfill the duties described above. Disciplinary action toward the Pastor would be in accordance with church policy.

VI. Violation

Violation of this policy will be reviewed and assessed as follows:

Violation by staff: executive committee

Violation by volunteer related to Children/Youth: CYF Director

Violation by volunteer related to vulnerable adult: Care Team chairperson or Pastor

**Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota**

REPORT OF CHILD/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE

Name of Alleged Victim _____ Age _____ Date of Report _____

Name of Parent/Guardian (if appropriate) _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Alleged Perpetrator(s) _____

Witness(es) _____

Date of Incident _____ Time of incident _____ Location _____

Description of Incident (be as specific as possible)

I have reported this incident to: _____

THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS FREELY PROVIDED AND IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

Signature _____

Are you the alleged victim? _____ If not, what is your relationship to the victim? _____

In order to maintain confidentiality, give this form to a Prince of Peace staff person.

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For office use only

This form received by: _____ Date _____

Title: _____

Reported to local authorities: Yes No

If Yes, to whom? _____ Date _____