

Safe Church Policy

Calvary is committed to operating a safe church environment - a Christian atmosphere that protects and nurtures all children involved in our ministries. We communicate our Safe Church Policy to our families. We also present orientations and training to all who teach, lead, watch over, and care for our children.

Our training and orientation workshops prepare and educate our adults for ministry with our children and youth. In addition to safe church training, we require those involved with children or youth in any capacity to complete background, reference checks, and/or FBI fingerprinting.

Calvary's Safe Church Policy has been fully implemented since 2004. Reviews and updates to the policy were made in 2006, 2012 and 2015. We will continue to review our guidelines. We will keep our training sessions current and up-to-date with the best information that is available in order to protect our youth.

Highlights of Safe Church Policy:

- Background checks, reference checks, and fingerprinting, as required, on all employees, including preschool staff members.
- Background checks, reference checks, and fingerprinting, as required, on volunteers involved with overnight trips and one-to-one mentoring/counseling.
- Background checks, reference checks, and fingerprinting, as required on volunteers involved with children or youth in any capacity, including but not limited to, those teaching Sunday School, nursery care workers, and VBS volunteers.
- Adults are required to guard against activities and situations where one child would be isolated with one adult.
- Counseling will take place only by authorized personnel in a location with a window.
- Drivers for church-sponsored activities must be properly licensed, insured, provide driving record in advance, and ensure that seatbelts are used.
- Those who work and volunteer with children and youth are required to review and agree to abide by this policy and either participate in a training session or take a test on the issues surrounding emotional, physical, and sexual abuse.
- The policy is also designed to reduce the probability of unwarranted accusations against paid and volunteer leaders.

- All adult volunteers and staff involved with children or youth in any capacity are classified as mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse.

We ask your help to promote the values and policies of this document. Join all of us in our call to provide a caring and safe environment for all who come to share with us in the Christian community at Calvary Lutheran Church.

Introduction & Definitions

Calvary Lutheran Church is dedicated to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because our congregation impacts the lives of so many children, youth, and adults, we have both an opportunity and a responsibility: an opportunity to enhance the lives of all our members and a responsibility to protect our young people from those who would endanger them. This policy is designed to ensure that Calvary Lutheran Church remains a safe church for any minors (under 18 years of age) and applies to all members and participants in all church-sponsored activities.

Child abuse is a problem that affects children of all ethnic and economic backgrounds; yet the most common response of the public to this problem is denial. In general, child abuse is defined as “any act toward a child that impairs physical and/or mental health immediately or over time.” There are several kinds of child abuse:

- **Neglect** - Child neglect is defined as omission of the child’s basic needs – physical, environmental, emotional, and nutritional – that are necessary for a child’s physical and emotional well-being.
- **Emotional abuse** – abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the child of worthlessness, inadequacy, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care.
- **Physical abuse** - abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap, or other), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a child’s body.
- **Sexual abuse** – abuse involving sexual contact between a child and an adult, or between a young child and a significantly older child. Also included is verbal abuse of a sexual nature and exposing the child to pornography.

Child abuse constitutes a challenge we must confront. We must be able to identify child abuse when we see it, know our responsibilities to report suspected abuse, and provide for

quality leaders to ensure that no child suffers abuse through negligence or a willful act while participating in programs of Calvary Lutheran Church. The remainder of the policy document is divided into three sections:

1. Prevention – specific policy procedures aimed at preventing child abuse.
2. Recognition – information to help recognize signs of abuse.
3. Response – how to respond if an incident occurs.

Prevention

In order to ensure the safety of any children and youth participating in activities at Calvary, the following procedures are adopted and approved by Calvary's Church Council:

1. No known child abuse offenders will be permitted to work with minors. For more information on Church Participation by a Registered Child Sex Offender, see page 11.
2. There is a zero-tolerance policy of sexual contact between a pastor/staff/volunteer and any minor.
3. Court-issued protection from abuse orders will be respected under this policy.
4. Nationwide criminal background checks, child abuse clearances, FBI fingerprinting, and reference checks are conducted on all Calvary employees, Calvary Preschool employees, and volunteers as required by law. Documentation of the background checks, reference checks and clearances will be maintained in confidence on file at the church. The references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past.
5. Nationwide criminal background checks, child abuse clearances, FBI fingerprinting, and reference checks are conducted, as required, on all adult volunteers involved in providing nursery care or serving as chaperones for overnight activities involving minors.
6. Nationwide criminal background checks, child abuse clearances, FBI fingerprinting, and reference checks are conducted, as required, on all adult staff or volunteers providing counseling to minors, or one-on-one mentoring of minors, or those having occasional one-on-one contact with minors.
7. Nationwide criminal background checks, child abuse clearances, and FBI fingerprinting are performed, as required, on all volunteers regularly involved in teaching Sunday School or who are involved with any programming for children or youth.

8. The church is only allowed to complete a Nationwide criminal background check for an employee or volunteer. All other checks must be initialized and carried through by the employee or volunteer. The Safe Church Coordinator will provide guidance on the clearances each individual is required to complete. Before a background check is run, prospective workers and volunteers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will not be permitted to work with children.

9. What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Senior Pastor or the Executive Board on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances, including legal requirements as set forth by the State of Pennsylvania. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. All authorization forms and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

10. The following individuals will be trained and/or tested on the Safe Church Policy: all volunteer workers for Preschool, music programs, Sunday School (including youth assistants if they are at least four years older than the students), Vacation Bible School, nursery, Confirmation Mentors, Wonderful Wednesday program, youth group events, adult leaders, and any other position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

11. Following completion of the Safe Church training or exam, participants will be asked to sign a Covenant of Participation. If an individual declines to sign the covenant, s/he will not be permitted to work with children.

12. Names of individuals who have been approved to work will be kept on file in the church office.

13. The following practices are to be adhered to as barriers to abuse in all aspects of our youth programs.

- There will be no isolated one-on-one activities between youth and adults. Private discussions should be conducted in open view of others.
- A minimum of two leaders is required for all events, trips, and outings.
- Adult leaders must respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers on outings. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations.
- Physical or verbal hazing is prohibited.

- Any discipline used should be non-physical and constructive, and it should reflect the values of the church.

14. Practices for all trips and outings:

- A permission slip signed by a parent or guardian is required for participation.
- Vehicles must meet appropriate safety and licensing requirements, and be covered by motor vehicle liability insurance.
- Drivers must be at least 22 years of age, have a valid driver's license and submit a motor vehicle records history, if requested.
- Seat belts are to be used at all times.
- Drivers must sign Driver Agreement form. (See Appendix)

15. The Safe Church Coordinator will be the Associate Pastor, or someone appointed by the Senior Pastor. The Safe Church Coordinator will:

- Serve as liaison with Calvary's Pastoral Staff and Church Council.
- Maintain a list for the Church Office of all individuals who have attended Safe Church Training or completed testing, and may serve in supervisory roles.
- Serve on any committee formed to review any claims of child abuse or volunteer misconduct.

16. Any new member wishing to work in any of Calvary's youth programs must wait six (6) months before they participate as a volunteer in any activity involving minors. This six-month period may begin on the date of the first New Member Class that a prospective member attends, prior to formal acceptance as a Calvary member.

17. The Pastoral Staff may, on a case-by-case basis, approve any non-member who wishes to participate in Calvary's youth programs.

18. Individual classrooms should have two adults when minors are present. In the rare event that there is only one adult present, arrangements will be made to assure that another adult in very close proximity has surveillance responsibility. At the end of an event or activity, both adults should remain until all minors have been picked up by parents or departed.

19. Similarly, discussion groups may, of necessity, have only one adult present. In such cases, the discussion groups will be conducted in a common large room where the presence of other adults in very close proximity satisfies the two-adult requirement.

20. As a general rule, a child should never be alone with an adult. In private counseling scenarios, whenever possible, parental permission and church notification will have first been secured, and the counseling session will take place at a time and in a place acceptable to the parents/guardians and the church.

21. Traveling adult-to-youth ratio:

In cars – at least two youth with an adult driver

In vans – at least two youth and two adult drivers

22. Adult supervisors must be at least 4 years older than the youth they are supervising on any overnight activity.

23. In overnight activities involving both boys and girls, a male and a female adult must be present.

24. Minors will not be permitted to leave the location of the overnight event with anyone except a parent or guardian, or unless the parent or guardian has given prior written permission. Medical emergencies may present an exception to this rule.

25. In those cases where a person has received training on child/sex abuse issues as part of their job or other volunteer activities outside of Calvary (e.g., teachers, scout leaders, coaches), the Pastoral Staff may waive the training program requirement. Instead, these individuals would be permitted to read the Safe Church Policy and sign the Covenant of Participation.

26. For personal security reasons, no person alone, regardless of membership or employment status, may enter or occupy any part of the church building between the hours of 11:00pm and 5:00am, except as needed for pastoral or building emergency response, unless by prior authorization by the pastors (for instance, in the case of a planned youth lock-in).

Recognition

Indicators of Child Abuse:

Children suffering abuse often will not tell anyone about it. Therefore, it is important to be able to recognize signs of abuse. The following characteristics may be indicators of abuse, although they are not necessarily proof. Individually, any one of the indicators may be signs of a number of other more or less serious problems. When these indicators are observed in a child, they can be considered as warnings and lead the adult observer to look into the situation further.

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse:

1. Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others
2. Fearfulness of parents and/or other adults
3. Destructive behavior toward self, others, and property
4. Inexplicable physical injuries, repetitious injuries

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse:

1. Withdrawal behavior
2. Failure to thrive
3. Threats of or attempts of suicide
4. Extreme attempts to seek adult behavior
5. Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns

Possible Signs of Neglect:

1. Failure to thrive
2. Inappropriate dress for climate
3. Stealing of food
4. Depression
5. Untreated medical conditions
6. Poor hygiene

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse:

1. Unusually advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior for child's age and development
2. Sexually reactive behavior
3. Clingy behaviors -won't separate from one adult to another
4. Run away from home behavior

5. Physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomachaches, fatigue
6. Sexually transmitted diseases

(Source: Safe Sanctuaries, Joy Thornburg Melton, 2011)

Reporting & Documentation of Suspected Child Abuse

Incident reports

Whenever there is an injury, accident or other unusual situation which occurs during an activity or event, an Incident Report should be completed and filed with the pastoral staff.

Responding to allegations

All staff and volunteers working in any capacity with children and youth are mandatory reporters. Whenever a concern of inappropriate adult/child behavior is witnessed or otherwise understood the reporting agent will, that same day, report the suspected abuse to ChildLine (1-800-932-0313) with as many facts as possible about the incident and those involved in it. Reports can also be made online at Child Welfare Portal: www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis (See Mandated Reporting Information FAQ in the Appendix for a detailed description of reporting requirements.)

Proof of abuse is not required in order to make a report. Knowledge of the identity of the perpetrator is not required before reporting. It is expected that abuse will be reported when an individual has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse on the basis of medical, professional, or other training and experience, or on the basis of observation of the child or the child's situation which would lead other reasonable people under similar circumstances to have the same suspicion.

Anyone accused of abuse will be treated with dignity, but for the safety of our children, any person accused of abuse will be immediately removed from further involvement with the youth or children.

Calvary Lutheran Church will not tolerate any form of child abuse in our programs. Offenders will be removed from positions working with youth even if the offense occurs outside of church and church programs.

Reporting child abuse to authorities

The state of PA requires that any church staff member and any church volunteer involved with children or youth be considered a 'mandated' reporter for child or elder abuse. Suspected abuse should be reported that same day to ChildLine via telephone 1-800-932-0313 (or online at Child Welfare Portal: www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis) and in writing within 48 hours after oral report. The suspected abuse should also be reported to the Pastors.

Church participation by a registered child sex offender

Jesus welcomed and loved the sinful, and asks us to do the same, while at the same time ensuring to the best of our ability the safety of all our members. The presence of a convicted sex offender in the church community is a circumstance that warrants measures that are unusual in a place we treasure in part for its openness and welcome, but those measures will honor the value of every human being.

A convicted sex offender who wishes to be part of this church community can expect to participate in a carefully constructed and openly negotiated covenant between the offender and the church community. This will be created on a case-by-case basis, allowing us to reduce the risk of abuse while at the same time offering the church's ministry to all who seek it. This covenant will be signed by the offender, the Senior Pastor, and the President of the Church Council. This covenant may include some or all of the following as appropriate and agreed upon by all parties:

- A clear statement of the role of the church as "sanctuary," with Biblical reference(s).
- Statement to the offender that "abusive behavior is a choice and we care enough about the offender to hold him/her accountable for it."
- We expect the offender to comply fully with all restrictions and requirements as a result of any legal actions.
- The offender shall continually participate in a professional counseling program, specifically addressing his/her abusive behaviors, for the entire time of participation in this church community. We strongly suggest that the offender continue such counseling for life.
- The offender will not accept any leadership or representational position within or on behalf of this church.

- The Church Council will identify at least two "covenant partners" for the offender. They will be adults, at least one of whom will be of the same gender as the offender. They will not be related to the offender.
- The offender may participate in worship in the sanctuary and in the adult church school class of his/her choice. He/she will use the most direct route from the parking lot to the main entrance to these facilities, not passing through any other parts of the church buildings. At any other time, the offender's sole access to church facilities is limited to the most direct route from the parking lot through the main entrance to the church office only. Any other participation or access will require prior authorization and accompaniment by one of his/her covenant partners.
- The offender may not use restroom facilities in the church buildings. Should an emergency arise, he/she will be responsible for getting one of his/her covenant partners to accompany him/her.
- At church-sponsored functions for families, the offender may attend with, but at no time leave the immediate proximity of, his/her family or one of his/her covenant partners.
- At no time shall the offender deliberately place himself/herself in or remain in any location in or around the church facilities which would cause undue distress to others. (This guideline prohibits an offender from being in or near the library, nursery, preschool, elementary, junior high or high school areas of the facilities for any reason whatsoever).
- At least twice each calendar year and as otherwise requested, the offender shall meet with and report to the Safe Church Coordinator regarding his/her status of adherence to these guidelines.
- If the offender should decide to relocate his/her membership (or substantially attend) another congregation, the Safe Church Coordinator will seek to inform the leadership of that congregation of the conditions of these guidelines.
- Before the covenant is finalized, the church's legal counsel should be asked to review it to be sure that it does not put the church at legal risk. The offender should show the document to his /her parole or probation officer, and have that person initial a copy for the file.

Whenever there is a change of church leadership, particularly a pastoral change or a new Church Council chair, the covenant should be formally renewed, with new signatures. Any changes to the covenant, or revisions of its language, should be discussed thoroughly in and acted upon by the Church Council.

Recognizing and Reporting the Abuse of Elderly and Persons with Developmental Challenges

Many of Calvary's programs involve one-to-one ministry with the elderly and people with developmental challenges. Therefore, this portion of our Safe Church Policy will help members who provide this care to be aware of signs of elderly abuse and the abuse of people with developmental challenges. This awareness in no way covers all issues surrounding this care, but simply seeks to further help provide a nurturing, thriving ministry for all.

Elderly and disabled persons are often very dependent upon caregivers or persons helping them with transportation, cooking, or other basic needs. Abusive persons use the power and control they have to get what they want out of the relationship financially, or punish the dependent person physically or emotionally for various reasons. As such, the subservient elderly or disabled persons are reluctant to tell anyone about incidents of financial or physical abuse, since those risks losing those helpful services and, sometimes, what they perceive in their loneliness as a "friendship". Also, they may be afraid of the repercussions of reporting someone, since they are very vulnerable.

The following may be indicators of abuse; when these things are observed they should be discussed with the Pastors to determine if further investigation is required.

Possible signs of physical abuse:

1. Unusual bruising, especially if not noticed on previous encounters
2. Packages of Band-Aids or other first aid supplies left out
3. Blood or dirt on clothing they are wearing or that you observe
4. New indication of limping
5. Favoring of a limb
6. Weeping at unusual times

Possible signs of emotional abuse:

1. Withdrawal behavior
2. Avoidance of eye contact
3. Flinching when touched or approached
4. Fearing contact

5. Complaints that caregiver has placed limitations on telephone use
6. Obvious isolation from family and friends
7. Apparent denial of proper health care
8. Broken assistive devices

Possible signs of financial abuse:

1. Complaints of missing money
2. Complaints of inability to balance (or find) checkbook
3. Complaints that bank account is overdrawn or less than expected
4. Credit card or check book in possession of caregiver (but may be innocent and for convenience of dependent person)
5. Limited food in refrigerator
6. Missing items from home
7. Correspondence visible about overdue bills, foreclosure, etc.
8. Observation of caregiver leaving with personal property, vehicle, etc.

Any person having reasonable cause to believe that an older adult or someone with developmental challenges is in need of protective services may report such information to the agency which is the local provider of protective services.

For more information on elder abuse please see the Older Adult Protective Services Act at <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=616729&mode=2>.