

## Safety Policy & Procedures

**All persons are created in God's image and as God's beloved, have the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Since children and youth are especially vulnerable to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, we have put in place the following policies, procedures, and safeguards in order to protect children and youth in our care.**

### Section 1 CHILD PROTECTION

Child and youth protection requires three types of programs, and our efforts combine elements of each:

1. Primary Focus - To educate members/volunteers concerning the proper treatment of children and youth involved in congregational programs, and to model appropriate parenting skills.
2. Secondary Focus - To provide programs aimed at preventing the recurrence of abuse and neglect in families

For the purposes of this document and under Kentucky law, an abused or neglected child is defined as one under the age of 18 **whose health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm by a caretaker who inflicts or allows to be inflicted on the child physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse or exploitation.**<sup>1</sup>

**Our congregation's written policy on child abuse prevention includes, but is not limited to, the following specific areas:**

1. Parenting Skills:

When possible, we will provide classes for members of the church and community on sound parenting skills and child abuse prevention.

2. Training:

Initial training on issues of child abuse in church settings will be required for all clergy, paid staff and volunteers who regularly supervise youth and children activities (e.g., youth group leaders). In addition, a summary of current child protection policy will be given to all clergy, paid staff and volunteers who regularly supervise youth and children activities. See Appendix A.

3. Communication/Supervision:

It is important that all paid staff be involved in regular, scheduled staff meetings to discuss prevention measures, policies, problems, and potential problems. While convicted child abusers who are members of the congregation are to receive the normal pastoral care afforded any child of God, at no time is a known convicted child abuser to be assigned to ministries with children or youth.

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<sup>1</sup> Kentucky Revised Statutes 600.020(1). The statutory definition also includes conduct creating the risk of harm, failure to care for a child, and engaging in a pattern of activities regarded as endangering a child. The definition given in this policy is not intended to provide an exhaustive listing of the means and methods of child abuse or neglect.

4. Individual Counseling:

One-on-one interactions are sometimes necessary and appropriate, but care must be taken that they be conducted in an environment that provides visibility to other adults. If at all possible, another adult is to have knowledge of staff members' whereabouts and with whom they are meeting. Youth or children receiving individual counseling should be told they are free to discuss any aspects of the counseling process with a parent or other adult - especially if they are uncomfortable about anything that occurs in counseling.

5. Adult Presence:

All church- sponsored or community groups of children or youth who meet at the church will have two or more leaders present of the age of 18 years or older (This policy is strongly encouraged, but not mandatory for Sunday church school classes). When the group includes both boys and girls, and parents are not present, it is strongly recommended that both male and female leaders be present. All youth group advisors must be at least 21 years of age or older and five years older than oldest child or youth.

6. Overnight Trips and Field Trips:

In no circumstance is one adult to take a child or youth on an overnight outing alone. In addition, when a group is going to an overnight and includes boys and girls, it is required that both male and female leaders be present. An adult may not sleep in the same bed as a child, unless it is their own child.

7. Open Door Policy:

The parents of the children and youth served, the clergy and administrative and professional staff of the church have the right to visit and observe the youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.

8. Discipline Policy:

Children and youth are expected to show respect for adults and each other during all church activities. Under no circumstances will corporal punishment (defined as the deliberate infliction of physical pain on a minor by any means) be administered. Appropriate response to inappropriate behavior include verbally reprimanding the child or youth, separating the child or youth from the group, notifying parents of the problem, and/or taking a disruptive child to a parent or a church staff member.

9. Background Checks and Hiring Policies:

Background checks shall be made of all clergy, paid staff and volunteers who have regular responsibility for children or youth. All volunteers, clergy and church staff shall sign the Prevention & Management of Child Abuse Statement signifying that they have read and understand the congregation's policy.

Persons shall be eligible to be a volunteer with children or youth after six month active church attendance.

If a parent would like to assist a class or activity, but has not had a background check, he/she must notify the paid staff. They may still assist, but at least one other authorized adult must be present at all times.

If a staff discovers through any method (fingerprint checks, county checks, self-disclosure, or otherwise) that a volunteer has been convicted of a felony or a misdemeanor or a violation involving a minor, staff may dismiss the volunteer or staff may move the volunteer into a position that does not require unsupervised access to a child.

## **Section II**

### **CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURES**

The purpose of child abuse reporting is to provide children and their families with an avenue to air their grievances, ensure that they will be heard and that appropriate action will be taken on their behalf. The intent of this church's policy is to be firm and fair without fostering an unnecessary climate of fear or the erroneous presumption of guilt.

**If any adult knows or has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been neglected or abused, the adult has a statutory duty to make an oral or written report to a local law enforcement authority (e.g., LFUCG Police - 258-3600 or 258-3690), the Kentucky State Police, the Kentucky Cabinet for Health & Family Services, Department for Community Based Services (in Fayette County - 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday: 245-5258 or 1-800-752-6200), the Commonwealth Attorney or the County Attorney.**

Known or suspected abuse of a child or youth, under the care or control of a church staff member or volunteer, must be reported immediately to the pastoral staff or Council President. Complaints shall be investigated promptly (See Investigation below). Specific details of the incident must be documented in writing and retained. Such reports are to contain the following information: Name and age of child, name and address of the parent or caretaker, why you suspect the child is being abused or neglected, and any other helpful information (such as who else was present at the time the suspected abuse occurred).

Preliminary Investigation: Kentucky Law, KRS 620.040(4), prohibits interference in the investigation of alleged child abuse by official agencies. Pastoral staff or Council President may conduct a limited initial investigation to determine whether there is sufficient information to warrant a report to authorities. Sufficient information includes the name of the alleged victim, the name of the alleged abuser, the basis for the report to Pastoral staff or Council President (e.g., firsthand observation versus third-hand rumor), whether there was physical or emotional injury, whether the alleged victim, staff or volunteer were in sufficient proximity to one another for the abuse to have occurred, and whether there are other circumstances that cast significant doubt on the validity of the report. However, this limited investigation should be short in duration and aimed at whether there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been neglected or abused. If Pastoral staff or Council President believes that interviews with any involved person or witness other than the reporter are necessary, legal counsel should be consulted. Once sufficient information is obtained to determine that a report to authorities is warranted, the investigation is over and the report must be made to appropriate authorities. If it is determined that a report will not be made to authorities, the reason for the decision should be documented.

The parent or guardian of child should be notified of the report, as well as the staff or volunteer against whom the allegation was made should be notified of the report. This notification shall be in writing. The reporter's identity should not be disclosed to the accused staff or volunteer, and the staff or volunteer should be told that he or she is to have no further contact with the child in question until further notice.

No other investigation may be conducted during the pendency of the official investigation by the Department for Community Based Services or law enforcement agency. This may take anywhere from two weeks to several months. Upon receiving notice from the investigating authority or the alleged abuser that the investigation has been concluded, Staff, after consultation with legal counsel, may proceed with appropriate further investigation or other action.

If a formal complaint of child abuse is made, the following policies shall be followed:

1. The synod shall be informed and the accused shall be temporarily removed from duties involving children in the congregation while an investigation is held. A trained response team member shall be made available by the Bishop's office to assist congregations with investigations and pastoral care. This response team member shall determine the nature of the charge and whether suspension from work in the congregation is warranted during the investigation. The synod shall be kept informed of the course of the investigation.
2. Pastoral resources shall be made available to the victim, the victim's family, the accused, the accused family and the congregation.
3. Prompt report of any threat of civil litigation shall be made to the liability insurance company.
4. If a charge has been made against a rostered staff person, the bishop shall not offer letters dimissory until the issue is resolved, following a full investigation.
5. All actions regarding the complaint shall be documented and kept on file.

**Appendix A**  
**FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**1000 Tates Creek Road**  
**Lexington, Kentucky 40502**

**PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF CHILD ABUSE STATEMENT**

Following a review of the congregation's policy for prevention and management of child abuse, this form must be completed by all clergy and paid staff, and all volunteers who teach or work with children. This form also serves as an authorization to do a background screening.

***Please Read and Initial Each Statement:***

I have read and I understand the policy entitled *The Prevention and Management of Child Abuse*.

I agree to abide by the policy for prevention and management of child abuse. The following is confidential information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Required for Background Check)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_ (required for background check)