

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH
Bangor, Maine

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

“It takes a congregation to raise a child.”

Statement of Purpose:

In a comprehensive effort *to ensure a culture of safety at Redeemer Lutheran Church and to make all members, guests and visitors aware of expectations for behavior around and relating to children and youth, Redeemer Lutheran Church* has adopted the following policies and procedures. This document is intended *to convey clear and specific direction for all events and situations involving children and youth at Redeemer Lutheran Church, whether they be on-site or off-site.* It is our responsibility as members of this congregation *to engage in on-going dialogue about what we can be doing to educate and protect our children and youth.* We pray that all of our children and youth are protected, loved, and provided for in all their needs and we are taking a proactive course in order to set in place our policy with the objective of *duly protecting our children and youth.*

Contents

- I.** Screening and Selection for adults working with Redeemer Youth/Children
 - A.** Volunteers
 - B.** Paid Staff

- II.** Supervision (Creating a Safe Church Environment for Staff, Volunteers, Youth and Children and Other Vulnerable Individuals)

Policies to be followed when a person in the congregation is known to have had an inappropriate boundary issue related to children or youth.

- IV** Duties of the Safe Church Committee

- V** Forms

Part I

Screening and Selection

Volunteers and staff members of Redeemer Lutheran Church will be required to submit appropriate application or resume information and will be asked to complete screening and background documents. All volunteers and staff will routinely undergo a criminal background check (CORI) conducted through the State of Maine

All information obtained from applications, interviews, reference and background checks including CORI will be held in strict confidence. Personnel and CORI files for volunteers and staff will be kept in a locked file in the Church office accessible only to those appointed by the Safe Church Committee. (unless the information reveals areas pertinent to the safety of minors. In such cases, Synod protocol applies – Pastor will inform CCP) All paid and volunteer workers will participate in a training session upon approval and acceptance for service and will be asked to participate in annual refresher trainings each year of service. Training will be sponsored by the Safe Church Committee and will include:

- Definitions and indicators of abuse
- Policies and procedures for supervision
- Standards of conduct
- Procedures and requirements for reporting

A. VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers working with youth activities at Redeemer Lutheran Church will:

1. be recruited through the appropriate church board or committee,
2. meet the “minimum membership rule” of 6 months
3. complete a Safe Church Volunteers Application,
4. provide names for three personal references and these references may be contacted by telephone, email or writing,
5. upon receipt of positive reference checks and review of application have a criminal, background check processed
6. upon receipt of a clear background check be approved for service.
7. document participation in Safe Church Training

Minimum membership rule

The “minimum membership rule” for volunteers of youth, children and other vulnerable individuals requires a volunteer to be:

- a. A member of Redeemer Lutheran Church or an associate member for a minimum of six months prior to volunteering. (Date of membership will be determined using the date in which an individual was introduced as a “new member” in official Council Minutes).

Application

The Safe Church Volunteers Application asks the applicant to provide biographical and background information and personal references. The applicant will be asked to attest to the truthfulness of the information provided, agree to be bound by the policies and procedures of the Church when volunteering, and consent to a criminal background check.

Review and reference check

The Safe Church Committee or its appointed designees will:

1. receive and review the application,
2. contact the references,
3. file a record of the contacts in the volunteers personnel file.
4. conduct an interview with the volunteer when needed

An appropriate candidate for service will be indicated as such in the Safe Church Committee minutes. Following this, a criminal background check (CORI) may be processed through the State of Maine.

B. PAID STAFF

Paid staff members of Redeemer Lutheran Church will submit a formal application for employment, provide a resume and be interviewed. Paid staff members will undergo a criminal background check (CORI) conducted through the State of Maine. (If applicant has not been a resident of the State of Maine for three years prior to the date of application, a background check may be processed to include information from previous state(s) of residence.)

Although the process of hiring or calling paid staff may be accomplished through another board or committee, the Safe Church Committee, or its representatives, will be responsible for the initiation, completion and reporting of satisfactory or unsatisfactory findings of the background checks.

Part II

Supervision (Creating a Safe Church Environment for Staff, Volunteers, Youth and Children and Other Vulnerable Individuals)

1. The “minimum age” difference for working with youth and children
 - a. There will be a minimum age difference of four years between the age of the youngest worker and the oldest participant in the group.
 - b. The minimum age for those working with youth and children is 18. Younger teens may assist adults, but will work under the immediate, direct supervision of a background checked adult and may not independently work with youth or children.
 - c. A young adult under the age of 18 is not considered a second person for purposes of meeting the “two adult rule”.

2. The “two adult rule” for the supervision of children, youth and other vulnerable individuals
 - a. A minimum of two adults should be present during any church sponsored program, event or ministry involving youth/children/vulnerable individuals. Additional adult “roamers” who periodically move in and out of rooms will be scheduled when more than one classroom is used.
 - b. When family related teams are used, a “roamer” will be needed to check in on the classroom periodically.
 - c. Children in the Nursery will be attended by his or her parent.

3. The “open door rule” for classes, activities, and counseling
 - a. All activities involving children/youth/vulnerable individuals will take place in areas that are clearly visible. Classrooms shall either have windows in the door or remain open for continued visibility. Offices shall have a window in the door or shall remain open while the office is being used for counseling etc.

4. All adults working with youth or children will go through a Safe Church training using the sheet labeled “Physical Contact with Minors and Vulnerable Adults.” They will also go through a session using this policy as the guide and topic of discussion.

5. The “never alone rule” for working with children/youth/vulnerable individuals

- a. Volunteers and paid staff should take every precaution to never be alone with a child/youth or vulnerable individual. There should always be two adult volunteer/staff or two or more children/youth/vulnerable individuals. These circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Vehicles when picking up children or taking them home
- Classrooms, offices or areas without windows in the door or an open door
- Classrooms, offices, areas with locked doors
- Cabins, tents, or hotel rooms at overnight events

- b. If specific circumstances ever create a situation requiring a volunteer or staff member to be alone with a child, such as the need to take a child home by personal vehicle, parental notification must be given and permission received in advance of the trip.

Note: When permission/parental notification is received by phone, a second adult must verify the approval, or the parent should be asked to call the church office voice mail to acknowledge that verbal permission was given. The second adult or office staff member retrieving the message will be asked to complete and sign a note to be filed in the volunteers/staff members personnel file. This process will help assure notification and permission was given and minimizes the likelihood of false accusations.

6. The “advance notice and full information rule” for events

- a. Written permission must be given by the parent/guardian for their child’s participation.
- b. Permission slips for an event will be kept in an event file for one year from the date of the event (or for the program year—September to September).

7. Special rules for off-site trips, extended trips and other activities involving children/youth or vulnerable individuals

- a. Children and youth participating in off-site trips, extended church-sponsored programs, events or ministries, such as overnight events, canoe trips, mission trips and retreats will do so only with a completed permission slip signed by the parent/guardian of the child/youth.

b. Appropriate personal data shall be obtained and maintained on file in the church office and onsite at the events which shall include:

- Parental/Guardian permission
- Emergency contact names and numbers
- Medical release signature
- Insurance information
- Physician name and contact information
- Information regarding medical conditions, medications and

c. Specific rules including student to adult ratios for volunteer/staff chaperones for events and trips:

- Appropriate adult to student ratios will be determined by the Safe Church Committee or its designees which may include the event organizers.
- Volunteers/staff shall remain present and visible to those youth/children assigned to their care throughout the trip or event.

d. Whenever vehicles, including vans, buses (either chartered or Church-owned) and private vehicles are used to transport children/youth, the following rules shall apply:

- Owners and drivers of private vehicles must demonstrate proof of insurance by completing a Transportation Form which will include a copy of their current Massachusetts driver's license and proof of insurance.
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- The number of people being transported in each vehicle may not exceed the number of available working seatbelts. Seatbelts shall be used when the vehicle is in motion.
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- Children under twelve may not be transported in the front seats of vehicles equipped with front deploying passenger-side airbags.
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- Passenger lists or class listing shall be checked to verify the presence of all children/youth when vehicles are loaded and unloaded.

- e. The “overnight rule” for volunteers/supervisors of children and youth:
- There shall be a sufficient number of same-sex supervisors for all overnight events.
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 - Separate accommodations must be made for males and females
- f. Children and youth exhibiting a pattern of inappropriate behavior (hostility, difficulty to control, resistance to authority, rebelliousness, aggressiveness toward others or prone to outbursts of anger, physical violence or unpredictable behavior) or who are discovered to be using or in the possession of alcohol, illegal drugs or weapons will be sent home immediately at the expense of the parent/guardian. Their parent/guardian will be notified and the child/youth will be forbidden from participating in future events until approval is given by the Safe Church Committee or its designees. The approval process will include a meeting with the child/youth, parent/guardian, volunteers/church staff and a signed contract of behavior.
- g. Volunteers/staff who are supervising youth found to be in the possession of alcohol or illegal drugs or under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be immediately relieved and removed from the proximity to minors or other vulnerable individuals.
- Once an individual is relieved of their duties they may not return to service unless the Safe Church Committee or its designees permit their return to service. Paid staff members may be subject to disciplinary procedures through the Safe Church Committee or the New England Synod of the ELCA.

Part III

Policies to be followed when a person in the Congregation is known to have had an inappropriate boundary issue

- A.** The New England Synod office will be contacted immediately by either the Pastor, a member of the Safe Church Committee, or a member of Council.
- B.** A covenant like the one below will be drafted and presented to the Synod and the Safe Church Committee for review.
- C.** Upon approval, the Pastor or church Council President will meet with the individual concerned and ask him/her to read and sign it. The document will be put in a secure place.
- D.** A committee of care and concern will be appointed to accompany the individual as specified in #8 of the covenant.
- E.** The Safe Church Committee or the Pastor will meet with the individual concerned twice a year to evaluate the terms of the covenant and any problems associated with its implementation.

Covenant Form

Dear:

I have discussed the circumstances of your participation in the life of the congregation of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bangor, Maine and with officials of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America New England Synod and its legal counsel, in light of the information concerning your crossing of an inappropriate boundary related to children or youth. I explained the fact that you wish to participate in church activities. In considering the appropriate course of action, the needs of the congregation, safety of its members, liability issues and other factors need to be weighed against your desire to worship and be a member of God's family,

The following terms will govern your participation in activities:

1. You will be allowed to attend services and church activities which comprise group activities and do not present the opportunity to be along with minors in an unsupervised setting.
2. You will not allow yourself to be in any setting with a minor (under 18 years old) where no other adult is present and should you find yourself in such a situation, you will make sure it ends immediately.
3. You will not volunteer or be allowed to teach Sunday School, lead youth activities, chaperone youth activities or trips, teach Vacation Bible School, or otherwise participate in youth group activities.
4. You will not possess keys to the church facilities.
5. You will not participate in any childrens' activities such as nursery, child care, or preschool.
6. You will not represent the church in any community youth or children activities or groups.
7. Other than concerning scheduled activities, you will not come uninvited to the church facilities.
8. A committee of "Care and Concern" will be appointed to support you, pray with you, and be in conversation with you regarding any issue you would like to discuss. One of the members of the Committee must be in attendance at any church functions in which you participate

I recognize that these conditions may seem harsh to you. However, they are meant to allow you to participate in worship and church activities in a full and meaningful way while protecting the church and you from misunderstandings, rumor, innuendo and harm. I have consulted with the head of the Church Council concerning these conditions. Further, it will be the responsibility of the pastor to inform all future Council presidents of the terms of it. The Synod will have the responsibility of informing future pastors called to this congregation of its existence. This agreement will remain in effect as long as you are a member of this congregation and is in no way affected by anything which may occur in connection with your status or record with state courts, penal records or officials. In the event you disagree with the terms and conditions of this letter, you have a right to appeal them to the Council, but in doing so the reasons for them would have to be explained to the Council. If you are unable to comply or fail to do so, the church will have to consider other action.

Should you wish to discuss these matters, I would be pleased to do so.

Sincerely,

Pastor

I, _____, have read and understood the terms of within the letter concerning my membership and participation in Redeemer Lutheran Church, and agree to them, this day of

Part VI. Description of the duties of the Safe Church Committee

1. The Safe Church Committee shall:
 - a. Be created by the Council of Redeemer Lutheran Church
 - b. Committee members will be chosen by the Council and serve three year staggered terms
 - c. Sponsor yearly training of volunteers and staff
 - d. Receive, review, and reference check applicants
 - e. Oversee secure maintenance of confidential files (see Part I)
 - f. Receive and respond to allegations of abuse
 - g. Will convene immediately upon the notification of a reported incident
 - h. Serve as the sole contact with the media (or will appoint someone to do this duty).
 - i. Will notify the Pastoral staff that an incident has occurred so victim, their family and abuser receive appropriate Pastoral care.
 - j. Notify all appropriate agencies including the Maine Department of Social Services and file all necessary reports
 - k. Upon advice of legal counsel will determine if the church's insurance carrier is to be advised and if the suspicions, circumstances and allegations are sufficient to warrant notification of law enforcement authorities
 - l. Review Safe Church policies and procedures as follow-up to an incident

APPLICATION FORM

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Area of ministry in which you are interested:

Past experience in this area:

3 References:

_____ I understand a background check will be done.

TRANSPORTATION RECORD

Date: _____

Youth group leader/driver: _____

Youth/Child: _____

Destination: _____

Leaving from and what time: _____

Arriving to and what time: _____

Signature - Adult: _____

Child: _____

Physical Contact with Minors and Vulnerable Adults

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bangor, Maine has implemented a physical contact policy that will promote a positive, nurturing environment for children and youth while preventing harm. The following rules address conduct expected of church personnel, whether paid or volunteer, when dealing with minors or vulnerable adults as part of church-related activities, rather than family settings.

1. **Corporal punishment** such as spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, etc. is prohibited.
2. **Church personnel** may use reasonable physical contact when necessary to restrain, to defuse an altercation, to separate combatants, and in self defense.
3. **Appropriate affection** between church personnel and minors is often important for a child's development and is a positive part of church life and ministry. The following forms of affection are regarded as appropriate examples for most church sponsored and affiliated programs.
 - Normal hugs
 - Side or shoulder to shoulder hugs
 - Pats on the shoulder or back
 - Handshakes
 - "High-fives" and hand slapping
 - Verbal praise
 - Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of minors
 - Holding hands while walking with small children
 - Sitting beside small children
 - Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
 - Holding hands during prayer
 - Pats on the head when culturally appropriate. (For example, this gesture should typically be avoided in some Asian or Muslim communities.)

The following are examples of contact that are not to be used in Church sponsored and affiliated programs:

- Inappropriate or lengthy hugs or embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Holding minors, above the age of 5, on one's lap. Note: The holding of minors in one's lap should only be done in the context of consoling an obviously distressed child.
- Touching buttocks, genital areas or girls' chests.
- Showing physical displays of affection in isolated areas of the premise such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas, or other private rooms.
- Sleeping in bed with a minor.
- Touching knees or legs of minors as a show of affection.
- Wrestling with minors, except for legitimate sports coaching, in which case another adult should be present.
- Tickling minors.
- Piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage given by minor to adult
- Any type of massage given by adult to minor
- Any display of unwanted affection
- Compliments that relate to sexual attractiveness or sexual development.

Safe Church Contract for Volunteers

I, _____
(Please print full name)

have read the “Safe Church Guidelines” of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bangor, Maine. By my signature I attest that I understand all of the guidelines, and that I may be required to have a criminal background check in order to participate in activities involving children and youth at Redeemer Lutheran Church. By my signature, I attest that I agree and abide by all of the guidelines and policies designed to protect children.

Signed (Signature)

Month/Date/Year

Witness (Signature)

Month/Date/Year