

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church Safe Sanctuary Policy

“But Jesus called the children to him and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of god belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ [Luke 18:15-17]

“I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” [Matthew 18: 3-6]

PURPOSE

The following policy is not based on a lack of trust in workers, employees, or volunteers but is intended to protect our children and the whole Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church [the ‘Church’] body. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of all God’s children, youth, and vulnerable adults that participate in any of the activities of BELC.

SCOPE

This policy shall be a guideline for all Church activities that involve the children or youth of BELC whether or not those activities are actually conducted on Church property. It applies to all that are involved with those activities.

POLICY

- Abuse or bullying of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult is prohibited in any Church activity.
- A member of the staff or a volunteer for any Church activity who observes or suspects that abuse has occurred concerning a child, youth, or vulnerable adult must IMMEDIATELY report such observed or suspected abuse to the appropriate legal authorities. If deemed appropriate, the Senior Pastor and/or Office and Business Manager should also be informed. Observation or suspicion of abuse involving persons in these positions should be reported to the Congregational President if deemed appropriate.
- A member of the staff or a volunteer for any Church activity who observes or suspects that bullying has occurred concerning a child, youth, or vulnerable adult

- must IMMEDIATELY report such observed or suspected bullying to the activity leader and safely neutralize the situation and/or circumstances immediately.
- It is prohibited to contact children or youth directly without the prior consent and knowledge of the parents. Any staff or volunteer-initiated email or text (System Management Server (SMS), Microsoft Membership Service (MMS), or Tweet, etc.) shall be sent to the parent's address as well.
 - No child, youth, or vulnerable adult in the Church's care shall be subject to corporal punishment, ridicule, or abusive language.
 - It is very important that all parties be sensitive to the alleged victim and his or her family as well as to the accused. Pastor care should be available to all in the time of crisis.
 - It is the responsibility of the activity leader to ensure compliance with this policy.
 - Called staff and other professionals in the employment or service of the Church are expected to exhibit unquestionable ethical behavior with their colleagues and the congregation at all times.

IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

Background Screening

Background checks for employees shall comply with the policy contained in BELC's Staffing Handbook. Volunteers as defined below, who have direct contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall be subject to a criminal background check using both State and Federal sources of data. Unless there are extenuating circumstances as determined by the Congregation Council (e.g. verified errors), participation is contingent upon receipt of a 'no records found' result. Periodic checks of volunteers (e.g. annually) may be required to affirm no criminal activity after initial screening. Costs for the initial and subsequent criminal background checks for volunteers will be paid by BELC.

Volunteer Standards

Before participation is allowed, each volunteer, as defined below, will have a minimum of six months of active participation in BELC congregational life. The volunteer shall be at least 21 years of age for off-site activities and at least 18 years of age for teachers (younger volunteers may be used when in the company of a qualified adult). In addition, each volunteer MUST complete volunteer boundary training and become familiar with this policy.

Supervision

Staff and/or volunteers involved with programming and activities for children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults shall meet the standards identified above. No adult shall be alone in a room or vehicle with a single child, youth, or vulnerable adult unless they are related (i.e., there should always be more than one adult or more than one child, youth, or vulnerable adult present).

On-site activities shall at all times attempt to maintain a minimum adult-to-child ratio of:

- Infants and pre-school children – 1:4
- Ages six to ten years of age – 1:6
- Ages eleven to eighteen – 1:10

Off-site activities shall at all times attempt to maintain a minimum adult-to-child ratio of:

- Infants and pre-school children – 1:2
- All others – 1:6

Overnight events are gender specific:

- Co-ed activities need a minimum of one volunteer of each sex who has met the standards identified above, in addition to meeting ratios for off-site activities identified above, e.g. seven girls and two boys – all older than pre-school – will need one male and two female adults to satisfy a 1:6 ratio.
- Overnight housing or sleeping events shall be gender segregated. Adults and children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall never share a bed or be housed together alone in a room (an exception may be made for same-gender parent and child).

Training

Boundary training is available through the Church. This training (or equivalent) is required of all employees and volunteers who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Documentation is required of all employees and volunteers who work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults that they have read and understand this policy, abide by its (and referenced) terms and conditions, and have successfully completed the required training.

Transportation

Transportation of children, youth, or vulnerable adults using a BELC vehicle shall be consistent with the requirements of the BELC Vehicle Use Policy. Transportation using a private vehicle shall be consistent with the safety portion of the BELC Vehicle Use Policy and the driver must provide beforehand evidence to the Church office of at least \$25,000 per person (and preferably \$100,000 per person) of bodily injury insurance.

Emergency Medical Release

The Church seeks to maintain the highest levels of supervision and safety in its care of program participants. Even in the best of circumstances, medical emergencies can occur. In such an event, leaders will make every effort to contact the custodial parent or guardian of a minor child. When contact with the parent or guardian cannot be established and a delay in medical care may result in further injury or death, we shall seek medical evaluation and treatment of a qualified medical professional.

To ensure that BELC is able to fulfill the above obligations, an *Emergency Information and Medical Release* (attached) shall be completed and signed for any child or youth registered to participate in BELC Youth and Family programs. Participation in Camp or Synodical events may require a separate form.

The *Emergency Information and Medical Release* form will, when accompanied by a valid permission form, grant temporary medical guardianship to the custodial parent/guardian's choice. Such authorization is not required, however, BELC shall not be held liable for any injury caused by delay in treatment.

Emergency contact information for each child, youth, or vulnerable adult shall be available to the activity leader while they are under his/her responsibility.

Parental Permission

Parent permission will be obtained for children, youth, or vulnerable adults left in the Church's care for any activity. A program registration form will serve as parental/guardian authorization and be in force for the entire program year. Off-site activities shall require a simple permission form. Visitors who do not have an *Emergency Information and Medical Release* form on file, will be required to provide this information on the *Parental Permission* form (attached). Participation in Camp or Synodical activities may require a separate authorization.

Communication

It is the desire of the Church staff to provide timely communication about coming events and activities. There is also a need to gather responses for some activities. Advances in technology have greatly enhanced this ability, but at the same time can leave children and youth vulnerable to abuse. It is BELC's policy to never contact children or youth directly without the prior consent and knowledge of parents. Permission to contact BELC children or youth shall be recorded on the *Permission to Text/E-mail Parental Permission* form (attached). Any staff or volunteer-initiated email or text (SMS, MMS, Tweet, or etc) shall be sent to a parent address as well. Personal cell numbers of children and youth can be a valuable reunification tool for off-site trips. For all other purposes, when a staff member or volunteer needs to initiate telephone contact with children or youth, they will call the family number provided.

Discipline

Good discipline differs greatly from punishment. Discipline reaches out and meets the need of children, youth, and adults. It seeks to build relationships and to enable children and youth to become self-disciplined through growing self respect. By maintaining discipline during all Church activities, the ability of every student to learn about God is enabled by the student being emotionally and physically safe, having a pleasant experience, and receiving encouragement and praise.

Under no circumstances shall any child, youth, or vulnerable adult in the Church's care be subject to corporal punishment, ridicule, or abusive language. Any concerns regarding discipline practices shall be communicated to the activity leader or one of the pastors.

DEFINITIONS

Abuse means harm or threatened harm to the health and welfare of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by any person responsible for the health and welfare of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Abuse occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or mistreatment, sexual harassment, sexual contact, sexual molestation; disseminating, exhibiting, or displaying sexually explicit materials.

Bullying is also considered a form of abuse.

Adult mean any person at least 18 years of age.

Appropriate means conduct that one would reasonably assume would be acceptable and permissible by a child's parent or guardian.

Bullying means mistreating or intimidating another.

Child, children, or youth refers to a person less than 18 years of age.

Leader means anyone directly responsible for supervising and overseeing the specific Church-related function, event, or activity.

Parent or guardian means any parent, step-parent, foster parent, grandparent, or appointed guardian with the general responsibility for the health, education, or welfare of a child or vulnerable adult.

Sexual abuse means engaging in any sexual contact, sexual penetration, sexual exploitation, or sexual harassment of a vulnerable adult, child or youth; or the dissemination, exhibiting, or displaying of sexually explicit material to a vulnerable adult, child, or youth, regardless of whether such conduct is with or without the knowledge or consent of the vulnerable adult, child, or youth. This abuse may be violent or nonviolent. It includes any conduct that involves vulnerable adults or children in sexual behavior for which they are not personally, socially, emotionally, or developmentally ready.

Sexual contact means the intentional touching of the intimate parts or the clothing covering the immediate area of intimate parts of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Sexual exploitation means allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child, youth, or vulnerable adult to engage in prostitution, or in the photographing, filming, creating electronic or computer generated images or other forms of depicting a child, youth, or vulnerable adult engaged in actual or suggestive sexual conduct. Further, it means the

development of, or the attempt to develop a sexual relationship between a cleric, employee, or volunteer and a child, youth, or vulnerable adult with whom s/he has a pastoral and/or fiduciary relationship, whether or not there is apparent consent by the child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Sexual harassment means any sexual advance or demand – either verbal or physical – which is perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimating or coercive. In addition, sexual harassment exists in a situation where there is an employment, mentor, or colleague relationship between the persons involved, including but not limited to sexually-oriented humor language; questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference unrelated to employment qualifications; undesired physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; or repeated requests for social engagements.

Volunteer means a person who participates without compensation as a leader or assists a leader in activities relating to any Church-related.

Vulnerable adult means an adult who has one or more mental, physical, or emotional impairments that render the person incapable of self-care and/or independent living without help.

ATTACHMENTS

- *Emergency Information and Medical Release* form
- *Parental Permission* form
- *Permission to Text/E-mail Parental Permission* form

Revision	Revision Date	Review Date	Summary of Revisions
0	10/2011	2013	New
1	11/2011	2013	Clarified insurance coverage for drivers using private vehicles.

LIABILITY RELEASE

Bethlehem Lutheran Church holds high regard for the health and safety of its children and pledges to practice due diligence in providing proper supervision and group safety. In consideration of the fact that Bethlehem Lutheran Church is a religious institution in which membership is voluntary, and having full confidence that every precaution will be taken to insure the safety and well being of my son/daughter during this activity, I hereby waive all claims against the leaders of this activity and the officers, agents and representatives of Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

MEDICAL CONSENT

In the unlikely event that the minor child named on this form becomes injured or ill during a sanctioned church event, I/we authorize the persons listed below to seek emergency medical attention by appropriately licensed or certified medical personnel. Should a parent or legal guardian be unreachable and a delay in care may result in further injury, suffering or death, I/we authorize the temporary guardian to make decisions about the following procedures as deemed necessary by a qualified physician.

- Examination
- Pain Control
- Orthopedic Care
- Life Support / Respirator
- Medication
- Surgery / Anesthesia
- Blood Transfusions
- Mental Health Care

AUTHORIZED TEMPORARY GUARDIAN

In the event of a medical emergency reasonable effort shall be made to contact a parent or legal guardian prior to medical care. If a parent or legal guardian is unreachable in the event of a medical emergency during an official church activity for which a parental permission form is in force, I hereby name the following person(s) as temporary guardian in making emergency medical care decisions as noted above. Such temporary guardianship shall be effective only in the company of an active parental permission form and only between the dates of _____ and _____.

- Rev. Bruce A. Kuenzel
Senior Pastor
- _____
- _____

_____	_____	_____	_____
Parent / Legal Guardian 1	Date	Parent / Legal Guardian 2	Date
_____	_____	_____	_____
Witness	Date	Witness	Date

PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

Student Name: _____ Grade in School: _____ Age: _____

It is my desire to have the above named child participate in the _____
outing. Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church has an active Medical Release
Authorization for this child, which I understand to be effective for the duration of this
trip. This Parental Permission Form shall be active _____.

Parent/Guardian – Please print

Signature

Date

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

Permission to Text/E-mail PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

Student Name: _____

It is my desire to allow Bethlehem Lutheran Church to use the following means of electronic communications with the above named child.

E-mail _____
(Child's E-mail Address)

(Parent's E-mail Address)

Text _____
Messages (Child's Cell Phone #) (Cell phone carrier)

(Parents Cell Phone #) (Cell phone carrier)

Social Networking Sites (such as Facebook, tweet, etc.)

Electronic communications will be used by Bethlehem staff and volunteers for official notifications of Church related Youth and Family activities. Any staff- or volunteer-initiated e-mail or text (*SMS, MMS or Tweet*) shall be sent to a parent address as well.

This Parental Permission Form shall be active through _____.

Parent/Guardian – Please print

Signature

Date