

**GRACE UNIVERSITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHILDREN AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY**

Adopted by Church Council on _____
Effective date _____

REVISED 8/29/13

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But Jesus called for [the children] and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” – Luke 18:16.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. – Philippians 2:3-4.

I. Purpose

A central value of Grace University Lutheran Church is to be a caring community, to be “ambassadors for Christ.” II Corinthians 5:21. The “Kingdom of God” is not something we wait for passively, but work for actively, through our choices, relationships, and values, in the here and now.

The purpose of this Policy is to be active and caring people to our most vulnerable members: children and youth. The Grace community is charged with the responsibility to protect children and youth from abuse and neglect, both from within our congregation and outside, as well. Grace provides a safe and healthy environment for our children and youth by educating all people in appropriate ways of relating to one another, and by implementing screening, supervisory, and reporting procedures to reinforce our educational efforts. These steps will serve to:

- Educate our children and youth in ways of identifying and resisting abuse, which will benefit them both at Grace and in the wider world;
- Assure parents that Grace is a safe place for their children;
- Protect employees, volunteers, and parents of Grace from meritless allegations of abuse.

II. Education

A necessary part of a safe and loving community, built in the image of Christ, is that all people at Grace understand healthy and appropriate ways to relate, touch and be with one another. By extension, people must also know and recognize unhealthy and inappropriate relationship and touch. The key to a fully realized safe and healthy environment for children and youth is regular education for all people of the Grace community, whether they are employees, volunteers, parents, children, members, or non-members. In this way, Grace realizes its goal to be a reflective community, challenging each other to live our faith.

Employee/Volunteer Education. All employees and volunteers who work with children or youth shall attend a training on how to promote healthy relationships and boundaries with children and youth. Prevention and identification of child abuse and neglect shall also be presented. Records shall be maintained for those attending such trainings.

Congregation Education. On a regular basis, Grace shall offer similar training sessions to all congregation members, and specifically to children and youth within the congregation.

Notification. All employees and volunteers shall be provided with a copy of this Policy. A summary shall also be posted at prominent places within the Church building and on Grace's website, which notice shall contain the definitions of abuse and neglect, reporting procedures, and the names and contact information for each member of the Child Safety Team.

III. Safety Procedures for Children and Youth Ministries

A. Employee and Volunteer Screening Process

Application Required. Any person wishing to work with or who may have access to children or youth as an employee or volunteer of Grace shall complete an application and, if requested, an interview for that position. The application shall include a request for references, authorization for a criminal background check, and notification of the Policy. All applications, responses by references, and criminal background check reports shall be kept confidential. A person may not work with children or youth until they have submitted a completed application.

Screening. A reference check shall be conducted for all applicants. The Personnel Committee shall be responsible for screening all employees. The Children and Youth Education Committee shall be responsible for screening all volunteers. Grace, at its option, may conduct a criminal background check on applicants. No person convicted of child abuse or neglect shall be permitted to work with or have access to children or youth. An applicant may be denied the opportunity to work or volunteer at Grace for any legal reason.

Criminal Background Check. In the event that an applicant is denied a position at Grace as a result of a criminal background check, the applicant has the right to be informed of the results of the criminal background check and to receive a copy of the records from law enforcement agencies. The applicant shall have the right to challenge the accuracy and completeness of any information contained in the background check report. Results of a criminal background check shall be kept confidential. Only authorized persons, which shall include the Pastors, Church Council Members, and designated members of the Children and Youth Education Committee and the Personnel Committee, shall have access to or discuss the results of the criminal background check.

B. Supervisory Guidelines for Children and Youth Ministries

Two Adult Rule. Events and activities for children and youth must include at least two unrelated adults at all times. Sunday School classes need not have two adults, but the “Open Door” policy must be followed. In the event that unanticipated circumstances cause an adult to be alone with children or youth, that employee or volunteer should immediately contact either a Pastor or the Chair of the Children and Youth Education Committee and inform them of the circumstances.

“Open Door” Classrooms/Activities. All Sunday School classes and activities for children and youth must maintain open doors to rooms when only one adult is teaching/supervising. When “bathroom breaks” are necessary for young children, an adult must accompany the child(ren) to and from the bathroom. The adult must keep the bathroom door open while the child(ren) is/are using the bathroom.

Events and Activities Off Church Property. All children and youth events or activities occurring off Church Property shall be approved by the Chair of the Children and Youth Education Committee. Events or activities occurring off Church property shall have the presence of two unrelated adults.

Nursery Policy. A sign-in/sign-out log shall be maintained in the nursery. All adults leaving children in the nursery shall sign in those children. Children shall not be released to an adult who is not a parent of the child or to an adult who has not signed-in the child.

Say Something. Employees and volunteers will be trained to identify inappropriate behavior with children and youth. Inappropriate and questionable behaviors by any person should be reported to supervising volunteers/employees or a member of the Child Safety Team

C. Reporting Requirements

Any employee, Council Member, or volunteer who becomes aware of inappropriate or questionable behavior at a Grace event shall report the behavior to a member of the Child Safety Team.

Child Safety Team. The Child Safety Team shall be composed of the Pastors, the Sunday School Superintendent, and two (2) designated Church Council members.

Immediate Action. Once a Child Safety Team member has been informed of a inappropriate or questionable behavior at a Grace event, that member shall immediately inform the other members of the Child Safety Team. If appropriate, the Team may conduct an investigation of the allegations. During an investigation the names of all persons involved with the allegations shall be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need for a thorough investigation. If the Child Safety Team determines that the allegation is credible, it may take any action required to remedy the situation, including prohibiting the volunteer or employee from working with Grace

youth or children. Employees who engage in inappropriate behavior toward Grace youth or children may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

Abuse and Neglect. If the Child Safety team becomes aware of an allegation of abuse or neglect that, if true, would violate Minnesota Statute §626.556 it shall inform appropriate law enforcement officials within 24 hours of the determination, unless the Pastors determine that the information is privileged from disclosure under Minnesota Statute §595.02(1)(c) Law enforcement will generally be notified in the event of credible allegations of physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect as defined below.

For purposes of this policy:

Physical Abuse of a child is any physical, mental or threatened injury, inflicted by a person responsible for the child's care, other than by accidental means. Physical abuse does not include reasonable and moderate physical discipline of a child administered by a parent or guardian that does not result in injury.

Sexual Abuse means the subjection of a child to sexual contact by an older person, whether an adult or minor. Sexual contact includes fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism, exposure to pornography and sexual intercourse. Sexual abuse also includes the use of a child in prostitution or in the production of sexually explicit works. Sexual abuse also includes threatened sexual abuse.

Neglect is the failure by parents or caretakers to provide a child with necessary food, shelter, clothing or medical care. Neglect also includes failure to ensure that a child is educated.

APPENDIX A

Grace Children and Youth Safety Policy

In order to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for Grace children and youth, the following guidelines apply to Children and Youth Ministries events. Any person who becomes aware of inappropriate behavior toward children or youth at a Grace event should immediately notify a member of the Youth Safety Team. You should also notify a member of the Youth Safety Team if you believe that a child or youth at Grace is the victim of abuse or neglect as defined below.

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Say Something. Employees and volunteers will be trained to identify inappropriate behavior with children and youth. Inappropriate and questionable behaviors by any person should be reported to supervising volunteers/employees or a member of the Child Safety Team

What is Abuse and Neglect?

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Neglect is the failure by parents or caretakers to provide a child with necessary food, shelter, clothing or medical care. Neglect also includes failure to ensure that a child is educated.

How Should I Report A Violation of Grace’s Children and Youth Policy or a Concern about Abuse or Neglect?

If you believe a child or youth is in *immediate* danger, call 911.

If you believe that a Grace child or youth has been subjected to inappropriate behavior at a Grace event or you suspect or know of abuse or neglect of a child or youth within Grace, you should contact any member of Grace’s Child Safety Team:

Pastor Dan	612-331-8125 (wk)	OR	651-285-2855 (cell)
Pastor Mary	612-331-8125 (wk)	OR	651-263-3707 (cell)
Steve Solbrack	612-578-8776 (cell)		
Jenny Odden	612-816-9462 (cell)		

When in doubt, you should report what you know or believe.

APPENDIX B

**Application for Employees and Volunteers Working with Children and Youth
Grace University Lutheran Church**

Grace seeks to be a caring and safe place for children and youth. It is of the greatest importance that employees and volunteers who work with children and youth are guardians of their spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing. Grace asks that you submit this application for this important ministry so that we may all be “ambassadors in Christ” to one another.

Please answer all questions fully. Your application and any information received from personal references or criminal background checks will be kept confidential.

Full Name: _____

Maiden, Alias or Former Name: _____

Date of Birth (mo./day/year): _____ Last 4 digits of SSN _____

Driver’s License No.: _____ State of Issue: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Time at this address: _____

If less than two (2) years at current address, list previous address for last two (2) years: _____

Have you ever lived in a state other than Minnesota?: Yes / No

If “yes,” list all other states/countries of residence:

City: _____ Country: _____

State/Province: _____ Dates: _____ to _____
(mo./year) (mo./year)

City: _____ Country: _____

State/Province: _____ Dates: _____ to _____
(mo./year) (mo./year)

City: _____ Country: _____

State/Province: _____ Dates: _____ to _____
(mo./year) (mo./year)

City: _____ Country: _____

State/Province: _____ Dates: _____ to _____
(mo./year) (mo./year)

City: _____ Country: _____

State/Province: _____ Dates: _____ to _____
(mo./year) (mo./year)

If you have lived in more than five (5) places other than Minnesota, please continue your list on the back of this page.

Have you ever been arrested for, convicted of, or pleaded guilty to a crime involving sexual behavior or child abuse? Yes / No

If "yes," describe the crime, date of conviction/guilty plea, and the location (city and state): _____

(Attach relevant documents and/or attach a separate sheet with further details, if necessary.)

Type of position/ministry you are applying for: _____

Are you a member of Grace?: Yes / No

List other churches you have attended in the last five (5) years:

Church: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____

Were you a member of this church?: Yes / No

Did you participate, lead or supervise any ministries or activities involving children or youth? Yes / No

If "yes," please describe the ministry or activity, and the dates you were involved with the activity: _____

Church: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____

Were you a member of this church?: Yes / No

Did you participate, lead or supervise any ministries or activities involving children or youth?: Yes / No

If "yes," please describe the ministry or activity, and the dates you were involved with the activity: _____

If you have attended more than two (2) churches in the last five (5) years, please continue your list on the back of this page.

List all *non-church* children and youth work or activities you have been involved with as a leader/volunteer:

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Work/volunteer activities performed: _____

Dates involved: _____

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____
Work/volunteer activities performed: _____

Dates involved: _____

List two (2) personal references related to working/volunteering with children or youth.
Do not list relatives:

Name: _____
Address: _____
Name of organization: _____
Telephone: _____
Position: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
Name of organization: _____
Telephone: _____
Position: _____

Applicant's Statement

I have been provided and read Grace's Children and Youth Safety Policy. I agree to act by the letter and spirit of that Policy, and, specifically, to do no harm to others, never intentionally be alone with a child or youth, and to give and receive only safe and appropriate touch while in the service of Grace.

The information contained in this Application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the churches, organizations, and personal references listed in this application to give any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness of work with children and youth. In consideration of the submission and evaluation of this Application by Grace University Lutheran Church, I release any individual, church, organization, employer, or reference, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages for release of information requested by Grace University Lutheran Church and/or its agents.

I have read the foregoing release and understand its terms. I sign this release of my own free will, and understand it is a legally binding agreement.

Signature of Applicant: _____
Date: _____

Background Check Authorization

I, _____, hereby authorize Grace University Lutheran Church or its agents to make an independent investigation of my

background, references, character, past employment, education, credit history, adult criminal or police records, and motor vehicle records including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information contained in this Application and/or obtaining information which may be material to my qualifications for service now and, if applicable, during the tenure of my service with Grace University Lutheran Church.

Signature of Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Parental Release

(for applicants under 18 years of age, to be completed by parent or guardian)

I, _____, as the parent or legal guardian of the Applicant, hereby authorize Grace University Lutheran Church or its agents to make an independent investigation of the Applicant, including materials maintained by public and private organizations and all public records, for the purpose of obtaining information relevant to the Applicant's service at Grace University Lutheran Church.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____