

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Child Protection Policy

(Approved by Trinity's Council February 2023)

Introduction

Then [Jesus] took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me...." "If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea." - Mark 9:36-37, 42

Our church's goal is to provide a sacred and secure environment for all our children. Effective policies and procedures, carefully followed, can greatly reduce the risk of abuse in the church environment. Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church (Trinity) seeks to minimize the risks to children and youth through the implementation of the following plan:

- a background check & screening process for all who will work with children or youth;
- general and area-specific safety guidelines for all church-sponsored children and youth events;
- a policy governing response and reporting for any incident, allegation, or disclosure of abuse;
- orientation requirements for all who work with children or youth;
- communication for the congregation regarding the policy and abuse prevention;
- a policy for known sexual offenders attending services and activities of the congregation;
- a process for responding to a disclosure of abuse and
- other general safety guidelines.

Definition of Abuse of Children/Youth

This policy seeks to limit the opportunity for an abuser to victimize children/youth through the ministry of Trinity.

Physical abuse of a child is non-accidental injury inflicted on a child by a parent, caregiver, or other person having responsibility for the child.

Physical abuse:

- may include various physical injuries ranging from:
 - bruises;
 - fractures;
 - burns;
 - scrapes or cuts; or
 - death;
- as a result of:
 - punching;
 - beating (with hands, stick, strap, or other object);
 - kicking;
 - biting;
 - shaking;
 - throwing;
 - stabbing;
 - choking; or
 - burning.

Neglect is abuse that is the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect may be:

- physical, such as failure to provide
 - adequate food;
 - necessary shelter;
 - appropriate supervision;
- medical, such as failure to provide
 - appropriate and timely medical treatment,
 - necessary medication;
 - mental health treatment;
- educational, such as failure to provide
 - age appropriate education or schooling;
 - assurance of school attendance;
 - necessary special education support; or
- emotional, such as failure to provide
 - attention to a child's emotional needs;
 - psychological care;
 - supervision preventing alcohol or illegal drug use.¹

Sexual abuse of a child/youth is any sexual activity with a child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or a child. Additionally, child/youth sexual abuse:

- may involve physical violence or emotional coercion as a means of exploiting the child/youth's vulnerability and powerlessness;
- could include touching a youth/child or causing them to touch an abuser, and may include the following behaviors:
 - inappropriate kissing;
 - fondling;
 - oral, genital, and/or anal penetration;
 - intercourse;
 - prostitution or trafficking
- may include the following non-touching abuse:
 - harassing comments;
 - exposure to, or participating in, pornographic material;
 - obscene phone, text, or other communication;
 - exhibitionism (exposing oneself);
 - allowing children to witness sexual activity.

Spiritual abuse of child/youth is any harmful action taken against them under the guise of religion. Spiritual abuse may be:

- use of religious ideology, language, precepts, traditions, or sacred texts to harm a child;
- compelling a child to engage in religious acts against their will;
- abuse that occurs in the religious context;
- abuse perpetrated by a religious leader/authority;
- invocation of divine authority to manipulate and harm a child.

¹ Physical abuse and neglect definitions adapted from "What is Child Abuse and Neglect? Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms" from Child Welfare Information Gateway at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/whatiscan.pdf#page=3&view=What%20Are%20the%20Major%20Types%20of%20Child%20Abuse%20and%20Neglect?> accessed 1/30/2019.

Application and Screening Process

Any person serving the children or youth of Trinity in a setting of instruction, control, or supervision is required to complete background screening. The TEAM Pastor will be responsible for ensuring that all who work directly with children have been given an orientation as to best practices for keeping children safe. Information collected for background checks will be considered confidential and used only for the purposes stated in the policy.

Eligibility to serve youth or children is limited to persons over eighteen (18) years of age who have been active in the ministry of Trinity for a minimum of six (6) months. Persons under eighteen (18) years of age may serve with adult supervision and should not be considered a second adult under the “two-adult rule” (see below).

Pastors and Youth Ministers on staff are subject to the same screening requirements as volunteers. The church Personnel Committee shall review and maintain records of screenings for church staff.

Safety Guidelines for Working with Youth or Children

For the safety and care of children and youth, the following guidelines are the policy of Trinity and should be observed by all staff and leaders. Ministries or organizations external to Trinity must follow Trinity’s Youth-Child Protection Policy while using this facility. Trinity members, regular attenders, and all approved ministry workers share responsibility for maintaining these guidelines, including the correction of others when in violation.

Pastors, volunteers, council and committee members share responsibility for maintaining safe, age appropriate procedures while children are within the walls or, the programming of Trinity.

The Two-Adult Rule

No adult shall ever be one-on-one with a child. The goal is to always have two adults present. To prevent even brief interruptions of the two-adult rule visibility must be maintained by opened doors, uncovered windows, and the presence of other adults.

Whenever possible, the two-adult rule should be applied in a manner that separates spouses or other family members. When spouses or family members choose to serve together care should be taken to minimize the risk to Trinity children/youth by:

- having staff, leaders or other approved adults serving in the vicinity; and
- maintaining open doors and/or uncovered windows.

Bathroom Guidelines

1. Program leaders are to encourage parents to deal with their infant’s toileting needs and to take their children to the bathroom prior to each program session.
2. Infants through elementary-aged Children:
 - a. All diaper changing is to be done in the presence and visibility of another approved adult.
 - b. All diaper changing should follow hygienic protocols including the use of latex/vinyl/nitrile gloves.
 - c. Preschool children are not to go to the bathroom alone.
 - d. One of the following will be adhered to when accompanying preschool children to the bathroom:
 - Two leaders will escort a group of children to the bathroom

- e. No leader will ever be alone with a child in an unsupervised bathroom.

Off Campus / Overnight Activities

When youth/children events occur away from Trinity, extreme care should be taken to protect participants from abuse. Activities and accommodations should be arranged to maximize the accountability of adults, minimize adult ability to isolate children, and to make all facets of the event observable and interruptible.

Off campus activities that do not require an overnight stay require the same application of the two-adult rule as events at Trinity. The two-adult rule should be considered in force when transporting children/youth for these events.

Off campus activities that include overnight accommodations must include 2 adults ideally one of each gender.

- no adults should room with children in a tent/dormitory/hotel setting;
- children/youth of same sex and similar ages should room together in a dormitory/hotel setting;
- the “two-adult rule” applies for room/bed checks and all other activities;
- adults need to shower at a separate time than youth/children;

Pastoral Care of Children/Youth

Unless licensed by the State of Wisconsin as professional counselors, Pastors and staff of Trinity Lutheran may not engage in therapeutic counseling. Pastors may engage in pastoral care of the congregation related to spiritual matters and personal crises to the extent of their training and expertise. Ministers must refer congregants to licensed counselors for matters requiring extended counseling or psychological evaluation. For pastors meeting with children or youth for spiritual care requiring confidentiality, the following protocols should be in place:

- either a parent, ministry supervisor, or staff colleague will be informed prior to one-on-one meetings with child/youth;
- meetings held on the Trinity campus
 - will occur during regular office hours or service/event times; or
 - if scheduled outside of regular office hours, service times, or event times, with the presence of parent, supervisor, or colleague in the vicinity; and
 - will occur with doors open and/or windows uncovered;
- meetings held off the Trinity Lutheran Church campus should be in public settings (eg. coffee shop, restaurant, etc.) and with visibility from a parent, supervisor, or colleague.

Guidelines for Reporting Abuse

Any person having reason to believe that a child/youth has been abused should follow these guidelines for reporting abuse. A “reason to believe” does not rise to the level of proof or certainty regarding abuse but suggests there is evidence that a reasonable person could conclude abuse occurred. Observation of physical signs of abuse, a trustworthy person suspecting abuse, or the disclosure of a child regarding abuse all satisfy “a reason to believe” for reporting abuse.

Wisconsin law considers clergy acting in the regular course of their work mandatory reporters for incidents of child abuse. The state enacts penalties for clergy who fail to report.

Reporting Abuse

In the event a child/youth discloses abuse or abuse is suspected, DO NOT QUESTION THE CHILD/YOUTH regarding events. Act to ensure that the child/youth is safe then record their exact words or the cause for belief abuse occurred. Then report in the following manner:

- First, Rhinelander Police Dept @ 715.365.5300 or Call Child Protective Services (715) 362-5695 (reports may be made anonymously);
- Next, make verbal contact with the LEAD or TEAM pastor, and
- submit a written report of the incident with 24 hours to the pastor.

Protecting the child/youth from abuse is the priority when making a report. Following the instructions received from law enforcement/Social Services and MAINTAIN STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY following the report of abuse. Allow law enforcement/Social Services to contact parents or others involved in the disclosure and/or investigation. DO NOT CONTACT PARENTS OR OTHERS INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT.

Local law enforcement and/or the Department of Social Services will investigate the allegation of abuse and make recommendations for further action in accordance with their authority. The staff and pastors of Trinity Lutheran Church shall cooperate with the investigation by local authorities.

The pastors shall, as soon as practical, consult with the following:

- appropriate legal counsel, for help in determining a complete and legal course of action in regard to the suspected abuse;
- the church's insurance company, to notify them that a report has been filed and what actions taken;

The pastors shall act as, or designate, the official spokesperson for the church. Additionally the LEAD pastor shall perform or delegate all other actions necessary to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion, including but not limited to:

- providing spiritual care and emotional support for those involved in the incident and their families; and
- if the abuse occurred at church or during a church event, evaluating policies and procedures to ascertain if deficiencies in policy abetted the abuse.

Abuse Reported Against a Trinity staff member or volunteer

Any allegation of abuse by a church employee or pastor shall be taken seriously and reported as outlined in this policy. Additionally, the employee or volunteer will be removed from his/her position, with pay if applicable, pending the completion of the investigation. Any person who admits or is found guilty of abuse will be terminated from employment by Trinity and/or dismissed from their duties with children/youth.

Training For the Church and for Those Who Work with Children/Youth

Each person approved to work with children/youth must undergo an orientation with the TEAM pastor which will include:

- guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behaviors with youth/children;
- methods for evaluating the risks of abuse and mitigating factors; and
- review of the Trinity Lutheran Church policies and procedures.

Known Sexual Offenders Attending Church Services and Activities

Trinity seeks to demonstrate the love of Christ. In order to be a safe place for all who attend, and to be respectful of anyone who has been the prior victim of sexual assault, individuals who must register as sexual offenders ("offenders") must comply with the following policy in order to participate in the congregational life of Trinity.

Trinity retains the right to deny attendance, participation, and/or membership to any individual who fails to comply with this policy. Furthermore, Trinity retains sole discretion to deny attendance, participation, and/or membership to any person whose behavior, criminal conviction, and/or sexual offender status gives reason to believe that person would endanger others, regardless of policy compliance. Failure to comply with Trinity's request to vacate the premises or activity will result in reporting to law enforcement.

When a known child abuse offender seeks participation with Trinity, the pastoral staff or designee will contact involved law enforcement, parole officers or intervening experts, create a ministry plan and communication plan which will inform the congregation of the presence of the offender and safeguards and procedures being enacted.

General Safety Guidelines for Children and Youth

For the safety and protection of children and youth, Trinity Lutheran adopts the following general safety guidelines for areas designated for use by minors.

Fire Safety

The church shall maintain working and accessible fire extinguishers in each area regularly occupied by children and/or youth. Each room in a child/youth designated area should have prominently placed notices of evacuation routes in the event of a fire.

Tornado Safety

Trinity is designated as a "tornado safe shelter."

Procedure for Reporting Violations of the Child & Youth Safety Protection Policy/Practices or other Child Safety Concerns

Protecting children is the responsibility of adults. All Trinity members, staff, and volunteers agree, to follow the Youth-Child Protection Policy and to report violations of the policy. Additionally, members, employees, and volunteers should report environments, situations, or incidences that raise safety concerns for children whether or not explicitly provided for in the Policy and Practices.

When an individual observes an act or environment in violation of the Policy or any concern regarding child safety, they must:

1. act to bring the situation or individual in compliance with the policy, if possible;
2. note the date, time, and individuals (both adults and children) involved in the violation or concerning activity;
3. report at the earliest convenience the violation events or concerns to pastoral staff or council officers. If the report is offered verbally it should be transcribed by the church leader as reported.

Upon the reception of a report of a Policy or Practice violation or other concern, church leaders must:

1. seek to correct the policy violation and bring the environment or person into compliance, if possible;
2. report in writing to the church Safe Child Committee the events of the policy violation and any remedial actions taken.

Upon the reception of a report of a Policy violation, the church Safe Child Committee will:

1. seek assurance that the policy violation or concern has been corrected, if possible;
2. investigate the circumstances of the violation and correction and/or contract an independent, third-party to investigate serious or repeated violations or concerns;
3. recommend to the LEAD pastor, or other leader, appropriate disciplinary or other remediating response to the violation or concern;
4. review, when necessary, the Youth-Child Protection Policy guides and trainings to reduce future violations or concerns;
5. record in volunteer and/or personnel records the individual(s) involved in the violation and its resolution.

Registered Sexual Offenders Definitions, Minimum Policy Standards, and Sample Attendance Agreement

Definition of Terms

- Service(s): any gathered event of Trinity Lutheran Church, whether held on the Trinity Lutheran campus or any other location;
- Small Group: any meeting of a subset of Trinity Lutheran Church members / attendees held under the authority of, or at the initiative of, staff or lay leaders of the church, whether on the church campus, in a home, or other location;
- Activities: services, small groups, events, retreats, conferences or any other function organized and/or led by the church, regardless of event location;
- Attendance Agreement: a covenant between the church and the offender stipulating conduct and requirements for church attendance and/or membership;
- Monitor: an individual approved by Trinity Lutheran Church who signs in and signs out the offender attending a church activity, and who accompanies the offender while onsite;
- Child(ren): any person under the age of eighteen (18) years old or is a participant in the church's student ministry.

Minimum Policy Standards

Any registered offender is expected to self-disclose his or her status as a registered sexual offender to a Trinity Lutheran Church minister prior to attending services or activities. Whether through disclosure or discovery, as soon as the registered status of the offender is realized the protocols of this policy will be in force.

Offenders are prohibited from attending services or activities of Trinity Lutheran Church under any of the following circumstances:

- if any victim of the offender, or family member of a victim of the offender, is a member or regular attendee of the church;
- if the offender has a history of failure to comply with limited access agreements in other churches or settings;
- if the offender fails to agree with, and/or comply with, the policies or requests of Trinity Lutheran Church; or
- any time that there are youth events/lock-ins/Children's Groups etc.

Offenders will meet jointly with a pastor of the church and a member of the Safe Child Committee to review the Trinity Lutheran Church policy and attendance agreement. The attendance agreement, which stipulates the conditions of participation, permission for background and reference checks, and gives permission for the release of information, will be signed by the offender, pastor, and a Safe Child Committee member prior to attendance at a church service/event.

Offenders are prohibited from participation in the children and youth ministries of Trinity Lutheran Church, including the lower level of the facility when youth activities are happening. An offender may not attend children or youth oriented services or activities.

The church will assign a monitor to offenders who will accompany them while on the Trinity Lutheran Church campus or at an offsite event. Monitors will be selected from the Safe Child Committee or other congregation members designated by the Pastor. **Family members of the offender may not serve as Monitors.** Monitors are subject to the same background checks as people working with children. If a monitor is not available on any given day, the offender may not attend.

Offenders will sign in with their monitor immediately upon arrival at the service/event. The monitor will “shadow” the offender at all times for the duration of the service/event. The offender will sign out with the monitor and immediately depart the campus or site without delay.

Offenders may only attend Trinity Lutheran Church worship services and/or activities, with or without children/youth present, when each of the following conditions are met:

- the service or activity is a publicly announced, church-sponsored event;
- there are at least five (5) other adults present, including the offender’s monitor; and
- the offender is in full compliance with the attendance agreement.

If at any time an individual ceases to be a registered offender, a copy of the court order removing the designation will be submitted to a pastor of the church. At that time, the pastor will initiate an evaluation to determine what restrictions shall remain in place.

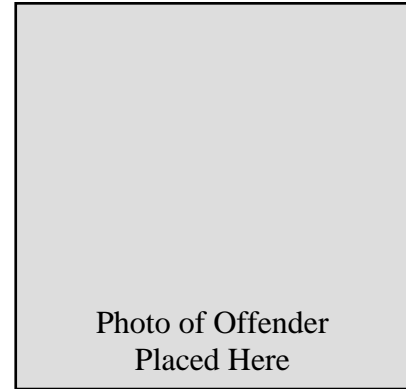
Attendance Covenant, example

As a registered sexual offender, I agree to the following conditions:

1. I will be assigned a Trinity Lutheran Church monitor who will accompany my access to church services and activities.
2. I will meet with the court ordered Parole Officer (PO), or other similar officer, as prescribed.
3. I will meet with a certified sex offender treatment therapist, if required by my PO or Pastor without complaint.
4. I will provide the treatment therapist’s name and phone number and the PO’s name and phone number to the Trinity Lutheran Church pastor.
5. I will get approval by the court ordered PO, therapist, social worker, and Trinity Lutheran Church pastor to attend the church. A copy of a signed authorization from each of these providers must be provided to the Pastor.
6. I agree to have my picture, name, offense level, and a copy of this signed contract emailed to all Trinity Lutheran Church pastors, ministry lay leaders, and staff before

attending a church service or activity.

7. I agree to have my picture, name, offense level, and a copy of this signed contract included in the records of the Safe Child Committee at Trinity Lutheran Church accessible to all staff and volunteers.
8. I will not attend any Trinity Lutheran Church services or activities (nor be present on the property of Trinity Lutheran Church or off-property gathering locations) without my approved monitor. If my approved monitor is not available, I will not attend any church services or activities (nor will I be present on the property of the church or off-property gathering location) at any time.
9. Immediately upon my arrival at a Trinity Lutheran Church service, I will sign in with my monitor. If my monitor cannot be located I will promptly leave the Trinity Lutheran Church premises.
10. I will not serve in any role in a Trinity Lutheran Church ministry without prior approval from the pastor.
11. I acknowledge and agree that all children and youth areas are off limits at all times, even if my own children are attending Trinity Lutheran Church and are present and participating in the church's children or youth ministry or activities. In that case, I will not walk my own children back into the Trinity Lutheran Church children's ministry area, but will make other arrangements for them, such as having a children's ministry leader walk them to and from the children's ministry area for me. I will not supervise any children's activities nor enter a designated children's area. I will not serve in the church children's or youth's ministries.
12. I will not attend a Trinity Lutheran Church small group where children are present, regardless of the location of the small group meeting.
13. I will not visit the home of a Trinity Lutheran Church family where children are present, without the parent knowing my history and offense level and giving permission for my entry into their home.
14. I will promptly leave any area on Trinity Lutheran Church property where children are present with the exception of a populated church foyer, auditorium, or area where five or more adults are present, including my monitor.
15. I will not have any physical contact with a child at Trinity Lutheran Church, including, without limitation, sitting next to a child other than my own, holding a child on my lap, or being hugged or kissed by a child at the church. If a child other than my own



approaches me to talk, I will acknowledge him or her and promptly leave the area. I will report this to my monitor before leaving the Trinity Lutheran Church premises.

16. I will only use the bathrooms after my approved monitor has entered and found no children in the bathroom.
17. I understand that the Trinity Lutheran Church pastor and my approved monitor may retain records of our meetings, which will be available to the offender's therapist, PO, and court at their request.

I understand the above conditions. I submit to these conditions and wish to attend Trinity Lutheran Church. I accept that if I break any of the above conditions, I will no longer be allowed to be present at any Trinity Lutheran Church location or activity. Trinity Lutheran Church pastors, employees, small group leaders, and church members are released from any legal responsibility or liability for disclosure of the above information to the extent indicated and authorized herein. [Signature form attached]

Printed Name of Offender:

Address:

Phone/Email:

Signature of Offender:

_____ Date: _____

Printed Name of Trinity Lutheran Church Pastor: _____

Signature of Trinity Lutheran Church Pastor: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name of Trinity Lutheran Safe Child Committee Member:

Signature of Trinity Lutheran Safe Child Committee Member:

_____ Date: _____

Offender Sign In / Sign Out Form

Name of Offender: _____

Name(s) of Approved Monitor(s):

Date	Time Signed In	Time Signed Out	Offender Signature	Monitor Signature