

CHILD, YOUTH, AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY OF EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Mission Statement

At Baptism, parents, sponsors, and the Church promise to help baptized children by faithfully bringing children to the services of God's house, teaching them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, placing in their hands the Holy Scriptures and providing e for their instruction in the Christian faith. The purpose of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Redeemer's (hereinafter called "Redeemer") ministry with children, youth, and vulnerable adults (hereinafter called "vulnerable persons") is to support parents in fulfilling these responsibilities, and to invite into participation those vulnerable persons who have not yet been baptized. In keeping with that purpose, this policy seeks to ensure Redeemer in its ministry with vulnerable persons strives to provide a safe environment with caring and effective leaders and volunteers. To promote this safe environment, the congregation binds itself to the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy described in this document.

Employees and approved adults will be screened in order to protect the safety of our children and youth. They will be required to subscribe to our "two adult or open door" rule (outlined on page 5), which requires an approved adult working with vulnerable persons to be accompanied by an adult approved partner or to provide visual access to the room during any ministry activities. They will also follow the guidelines set forth in this Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.

DEFINITIONS

Persons in relation to Children and Youth

1. **Church Personnel:** All paid personnel of Redeemer who receive compensation in the form of salary, wages, or benefits.
2. A **Child** is anyone under the age of 12 years.
3. A **Youth** is anyone who is at least 12 years old but not yet 19 years old and has not graduated high school. A youth may be asked to volunteer but would not count as an adult.
4. A **Young Adult** is anyone that is at least 18 years old and has graduated high school but not yet 21 years old. A young adult may be asked to volunteer with children's activities with an approved adult.
5. A **Vulnerable Adult** is anyone over the age of 18 that is in need of special care, support, or protection because of a disability.
6. An **Approved Adult** is anyone that is over 21 years of age and is a member of Redeemer or a regularly attending member for six months who has satisfied all the requirements of the Child Protection Policy and the application procedure for Approved Adults. For any Youth activities involving the Senior High, an approved adult must be at least 24 years old.
7. An **Adult** is anyone that is over 21 years of age who is not an Approved Adult. For any Youth activities involving the Senior High, an approved adult must be at least 24 years old.

Types of Abuse

1. **Physical abuse** is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a vulnerable person.
2. **Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a vulnerable person and an adult. This includes any activity that is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or vulnerable person.
3. **Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another vulnerable person when:
 - a. there is no consent, and/or
 - b. one child or youth has power over the other vulnerable person.

This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any vulnerable person.

4. **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a vulnerable person that results in an observable and material impairment in the vulnerable person's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
5. **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a vulnerable person's basic needs or the failure to protect a vulnerable person from harm.
6. **Spiritual abuse** is the act of using religious reference to shame or by guilt to motivate a vulnerable person into a particular action or behavior.
7. **Harassment** is a situation where there is an employment, mentor, or colleague relationship between the persons involved, including but not limited to: sexual behavior or language,

undesired physical contact, inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance, or repeated requests for social engagements with any vulnerable person.

8. **Other** Any act, not listed above, that is considered a state or federal offense.

Application Process to Become an Approved Adult

Redeemer requires that adults complete the following application process in order to become an Approved Adult.

1. Complete *The Lutheran Church of the Redeemer Approved Adult Application* form.
2. Give church officials the written authorization to obtain a “Criminal Record Check” and “Sexual offender registry check” and if applicable a “Driving or Motor Vehicle records check” from law enforcement agencies. New background checks are required for all applicants. The “Criminal Record Check” and “Sexual offender registry check” forms can be found by following the directions at http://www.sled.state.sc.us/sled/default.asp?Category=CATCH_SSN&Service=crc. The “Driving or Motor Vehicle records check” can be found by following the directions at <https://www.scdmvonline.com/dmvppublic/trans/DrvRec.aspx>. If a check needs to be made for an out of state applicant, then the appropriate state facilities will be contacted. This check will be repeated every three (3) years.
3. If the record check is clear:
 - a. Attend a congregation-authorized training session once every three (3) years. The level of training will be commensurate with the amount of time a person shall be working with vulnerable persons.
 - b. Sign the *Covenant for Sexual Responsibility* acknowledging that the applicant has read and understood the *Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy* and agrees to comply with it.
 - c. Sign the *Code of Conduct Agreement*.
4. If the record check is not clear, items will be evaluated on whether they would prohibit the person from volunteering or working with vulnerable persons. The applicant will be notified in writing of the decision.

APPROVED ADULT REQUIREMENTS

In an effort to provide a safe environment for youth/children, all paid personnel and all approved adults who work with youth/children at Redeemer shall submit to screening procedures. Redeemer will provide the trainings, or information to attend appropriate trainings, although the expense of training and background checks may be the responsibility of the approved adult.

1. Screening Procedures

- a. **An Approved Adult application** completed by the applicant that includes an acknowledgement for the release of information to conduct background checks and the **Code of Conduct Agreement**. A background check will be performed.
- b. **Driving or Motor Vehicle records check** if the person will be transporting vulnerable persons .
- c. **Sexual offender registry check** in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years shall be performed. (www.sled.state.sc.us)

2. All information gathered about an applicant will be kept secure at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary of whether each person is appropriate to work with children or youth. This information will be kept on file accessed only by appointed Redeemer persons.

Appropriate Behavioral Guidelines for Working with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

To ensure that a nurturing Christian environment for children, youth, and vulnerable adults is maintained within Redeemer, to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults who participate in activities sponsored by the church from sexual and/or physical abuse, and to protect the congregation's members from false allegations of abuse, the congregation has adopted the following policies:

1. **Child Abuse Prohibited:** Those who work with vulnerable persons accept a special responsibility to protect them. They shall not violate that responsibility by causing any types of abuse previously defined under the header "Types of Abuse" on page two of this policy.
2. **Two Adult Rule:** One approved adult with a second adult should be present during any church activity. When only one approved adult is present, doors will be left open for easy observation of the room by others. . One-to-one counseling shall be conducted in an open area with easy visibility.
3. **Children/Youth Room Rule:** Children/youth should not be without adult supervision in a closed door room or playground. If children/youth are in a separate room from the supervision of adults, the door must remain open and must be in earshot of an Approved Adult.
4. **Empty Room Policy:** After an activity, check rooms to ensure that all participants have vacated the room. This could prevent situations where abuse might occur.
5. **Permission Slips:** Children/youth must have an annual permission slip on file to participate in any activity that takes place off church grounds or an overnight activity. That permission must be in writing, signed and dated by a parent or guardian. A separate permission slip needs to be signed for activities that are longer than one night.
6. **Overnight Rule:** Overnight activities involving children/youth shall be chaperoned by at least two Approved Adults.

7. **Transportation of Children:** When children and youth are transported for church activities, they will be transported in groups with at least one Approved Adult in each vehicle. To transport vulnerable persons in a personal vehicle for church activities, the driver must be an Approved Adult. A non-related vulnerable person cannot be in a vehicle alone with the adult. Transportation to and from the church before and after the event is the child's parents/family responsibility and a permission slip must be signed and dated by a parent or guardian with carpooling details.
8. **Expressions of Affection:** True expressions of affection toward children/youth can be a manifestation of Christ's love for all of us. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children/youth. Everyone must use caution and common sense when physically expressing affection toward children.

Some positive and **appropriate** forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- "High-fives" and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children and youth
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during prayer

The following forms of affection are considered **inappropriate** with children/youth in the ministry setting because many of them are behaviors that child molesters use to groom children, youth, and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children when this is not age appropriate and desired by the child. This includes vulnerable persons sitting on laps when either not age appropriate or not desired by vulnerable person).

- Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas, or other private rooms
- Occupying a bed with children, youth, or a vulnerable adult.
- Wrestling with children or youth
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, “You sure are developing,” or “You look really hot in those jeans.”
- Snapping bras, giving wedgies, or similar touch of underwear/swimwear/clothing whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
- Singling out individuals from the group by giving of gifts or special treats.

To the best of your ability, avoid the above situations.

General Conduct for the Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Young Adults

The following guidelines are to assist Church Personnel/Approved Adults to be aware of monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions with children/youth to identify and stop those that may be inherently harmful. We recognize there are times where exceptions to these guidelines must be made.

1. Programs for children under twelve (12) years old will have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents, legal guardians, or those designated by written permission.
2. Nursery for children under twelve (12) years old will have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents, legal guardians, or adult designated by written permission.
3. Church Personnel/Approved Adults are prohibited from the non-sacramental use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for vulnerable persons.
4. Church Personnel/Approved Adults will respond to vulnerable persons with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socio-economic states. They will portray a positive role model for vulnerable persons by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. Favoritism is not permitted. Foul language is not permitted.
5. . One-to-one counseling shall be conducted in an open area with easy visibility. Church Personnel/Approved Adults are prohibited from dating, becoming romantically involved, or having any sexual contact with a vulnerable person.
6. Church Personnel/Approved Adults are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented material (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) on church property or in the presence of vulnerable persons except as expressly permitted as part of an educational program.
7. Church Personnel/Approved Adults are prohibited from using the Internet to post pictures of vulnerable persons on any medium except the church web site unless there is a Photo Consent signed by parent or legal guardian for a specific event.
8. For overnight conferences or activities with youth/children, at least one Approved Adult should occupy adjoining rooms to the best of your ability. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep with all the children or youth participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge.

9. Church Personnel/Approved Adults are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of vulnerable persons.
10. Church Personnel/Approved Adults are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of vulnerable persons. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth, or others.

1.

Reporting and Responding to Reports of Suspicious or Inappropriate Activity

As the church, we believe that God loves all of us, as we are all children of God. Occasionally we may encounter those who have done more to tear down the community than to build it up. At the same time, there are those who are accused of these wrong doings and are innocent. We have these policies and procedures in order to protect all parties involved. Therefore, it is imperative that these issues of Reporting and Responding be handled with graciousness and CONFIDENTIALITY.

1. Copies of this Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy which include Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect according to Federal and State Law are available in the Redeemer church office.
2. Initial reporting of suspicious or inappropriate activity
 - a. Suspicious or inappropriate activity brought to the attention of a Church Personnel/Approved Adult must be reported immediately to the Church Council President and Pastor.
 - b. The Church Council President and Pastor receiving the Confidential Notice of Concern shall then document the date, time and circumstances of the alleged incident.
3. Response to allegations of abuse or neglect:
 - a. If it is determined there is a reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, then the following actions shall be taken:
 - i. Church Council President and Pastor should be contacted immediately.
 - ii. A report shall be made immediately to the proper authorities, either law enforcement or the South Carolina Department of Social Services.
 - iii. All allegations will be taken seriously and will be responded to in a professional manner.
 - b. If appropriate under the law, under the strict guidance of the Redeemer's legal counsel, the Church Council President or Pastor shall:
 - i. Contact the alleged victim's parents, if it will not put the child in jeopardy.
 - ii. Maintain documents of all efforts to handle the situation.
 - iii. In extreme situations, the Church Council President or Pastor will designate a spokesperson.
 - iv. Each case shall be debriefed among Church Council President or Pastor and Redeemer Church Council Executive Committee.
4. Care of Documents: All information will be treated in a confidential manner, except as required by legal reporting requirements or legal process.

FORM A

The Lutheran Church of the Redeemer Approved Adult Application

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position involving the supervision of children/youth. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Name: _____
Last First Middle

Present address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone number: _____ Work number: _____

Identity must be confirmed with a state driver's license or other photographic identification.

Date confirmed/copied: _____ I.D. or Driver's License Number: _____

State of Issue: _____ Expiration Date: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY: The following information must be completed and will be kept confidential in a secured file:

____ Volunteer Application Date received: _____

____ Child, Youth, Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy read Date signed: _____

____ Covenant Statement signed Date signed: _____

____ Code of Conduct signed Date signed: _____

____ Training session completed Date completed: _____

____ Sexual offender registry check completed Date completed: _____

____ Criminal Record Check completed Date completed: _____

____ Driving or Motor Vehicle records check (if applicable) completed
Date completed: _____

Have you ever been accused, arrested for, charged with, convicted of, or pleaded guilty to a crime, either misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug related charges, child abuse, and other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)? Answering "yes" to this question does not automatically disqualify you from service. No _____ Yes _____

If yes, please explain fully – attach a separate page if necessary.

Signature

Print or type full name

Date: _____

Signature of Pastor or Supervisor

Date

FORM B

Covenant for Sexual Responsibility

For the purpose of this covenant, I, the undersigned, understand that the Redeemer Church defines sexual misconduct in the following way:

Abuse

Sexual abuse, both physical or emotional, or sexual molestation of any person, including but not limited to, any sexual involvement, sexual activity, or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent.

1. **Physical abuse** is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
2. **Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a vulnerable person and an adult. This includes any activity that is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or vulnerable person.
3. **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a vulnerable person that results in an observable and material impairment in the vulnerable person's growth, development or psychological functioning
4. **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a vulnerable person's basic needs or the failure to protect a vulnerable person from harm.

Harassment

Harassment is a situation where there is an employment, mentor, or colleague relationship between the persons involved, including but not limited to, sexual behavior; undesired physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance, or repeated requests for social engagements with any vulnerable person.

I agree to abstain from any behavior that constitutes sexual abuse, physical abuse, harassment, emotional abuse or intentional neglect of children or adults while I minister as a paid employee or volunteer. I have never been convicted of sexual misconduct as defined above, nor has such a conviction been expunged.

Signature

Print or type full name

Witness Signature

Print or type full name

Date: _____

FORM C

Code of Conduct Agreement

Read and initial each item to signify your agreement to comply with the statement.

_____ I agree to do my best to prevent abuse, harassment, and neglect among vulnerable persons involved in church activities and services.

_____ I agree not to physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse, harass, or neglect a vulnerable person.

_____ I agree to comply with the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy defined by Redeemer.

_____ I agree to comply with Redeemer's Covenant for Sexual Misconduct (Form B).

_____ I agree to comply with the Redeemer's Appropriate Behavioral Guidelines for Working with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults.

_____ I acknowledge my obligation and responsibility to protect vulnerable persons and agree to report known or suspected abuse of vulnerable persons to appropriate church personnel in accordance with the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.

_____ I understand that Redeemer will not tolerate abuse of vulnerable persons and I agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

Signature

Print or type full name

Witness Signature

Print or type full name

Date: _____

Revised June 11, 2023

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