

POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Upper Midwest Diocese,
Minnesota Deanery

Version: August 2023

Dear church family,

Children are a valued part of our church family, and we treasure their presence as Christ did. We welcome the children and seek to lead them, through worship, teaching, and example, to experience the love of God in such a way that inspires them to follow after Him and share their faith with others.

The churches of the Minnesota Deanery are committed to ensuring that every child in our care is treated with dignity and respect. Our policies are intended to help create a safe environment for children, protecting them, you, and the mission of the Minnesota Deanery.

Statistics regarding child abuse are alarming. The effects of abuse can damage children at their core and follow them into adulthood. Abused children are children at risk. They can become adults who suffer from low self-esteem, who are unable to form and keep healthy relationships, and who struggle to maintain healthy boundaries. As the church, we will work to extend protection, love, and care to the children entrusted to us.

After you have carefully read this manual, please complete the agreement form found on the final pages.

Sincerely,

Christian Ruch, *Minnesota Dean, Church of the Cross, Hopkins, MN*

Paul Calvin, *Church of the Redeemer, St. Paul, MN*

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Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth

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Introduction

Definition of Terms

When used in this manual, the following terms have the following meanings:

- **“Child”** means any individual under the age of twelve (12).
- **“Youth”** means any individual who is at least twelve (12) years of age and under the age of eighteen (18).
- **“Minor”** means any individual who is under the age of eighteen (18).
- **“Covered Individuals”** means church clergy, staff, vestry or parish council, paid workers and all volunteers 18 years and older who work with or have access to children on behalf of the church.
- **“Children’s Pastor”** means staff member or volunteer charged with overseeing the church’s children’s ministry.
- **“Youth Pastor”** means staff member or volunteer charged with overseeing the church’s youth ministry.
- **“Rector”** means the ordained priest given oversight of the congregation, ministry teams, vestry or parish council, and personnel of the church.
- **“Senior Warden”** means the vestry or parish council member elected to give general supervision over the business of the church.
- **“Ministry Leader”** means a person, volunteer or staff, who oversees a particular ministry within the church.

Prohibition on Abuse

The Minnesota Deanery has zero tolerance for abuse in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of all Covered Individuals in the Minnesota Deanery to act in the best interest of all children and youth in every program.

Definition of Abuse of Minors

Child abuse, in practical terms, refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust that is not accidental and that harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare.

Each state has its own definition of what constitutes child abuse under civil and criminal laws, and each church in the Minnesota Deanery should be familiar with the laws and legal definitions in its jurisdiction. In general, the definitions of child abuse and child neglect in all states include the following elements (among others):

- Physical abuse
- Physical and/or mental neglect
- Sexual abuse and/or exploitation

Violations Of This Manual

Violations of policies in this manual may lead to discipline, up to and including immediate termination. In addition, committing child abuse can result in criminal or legal consequences.

Safety Coordinator

Each church in the Minnesota Deanery has appointed a Safety Coordinator to oversee and implement policies in this manual and to handle problems or concerns related to child and youth safety.

The name of the Safety Coordinator at my church is:
(Fill in name and phone number.)

Rector

The name of the Rector at my church is:

Senior Warden

The name of the Senior Warden at my church is:

Junior Volunteers, Ages 14-17

We value youth as volunteers in our children's ministries. Junior Volunteers who work with or have access to children will fulfill requirements pertaining to the Minnesota Deanery's policies, which might, depending on the youth's age and role, include:

- a six-month attendance requirement.
- an interview with a church ministry leader.
- a completed and approved background check.
- reading and signing the Minnesota Deanery's policies or a Junior Volunteer version of those policies.
- training on abuse awareness and response.
- training on classroom procedures.

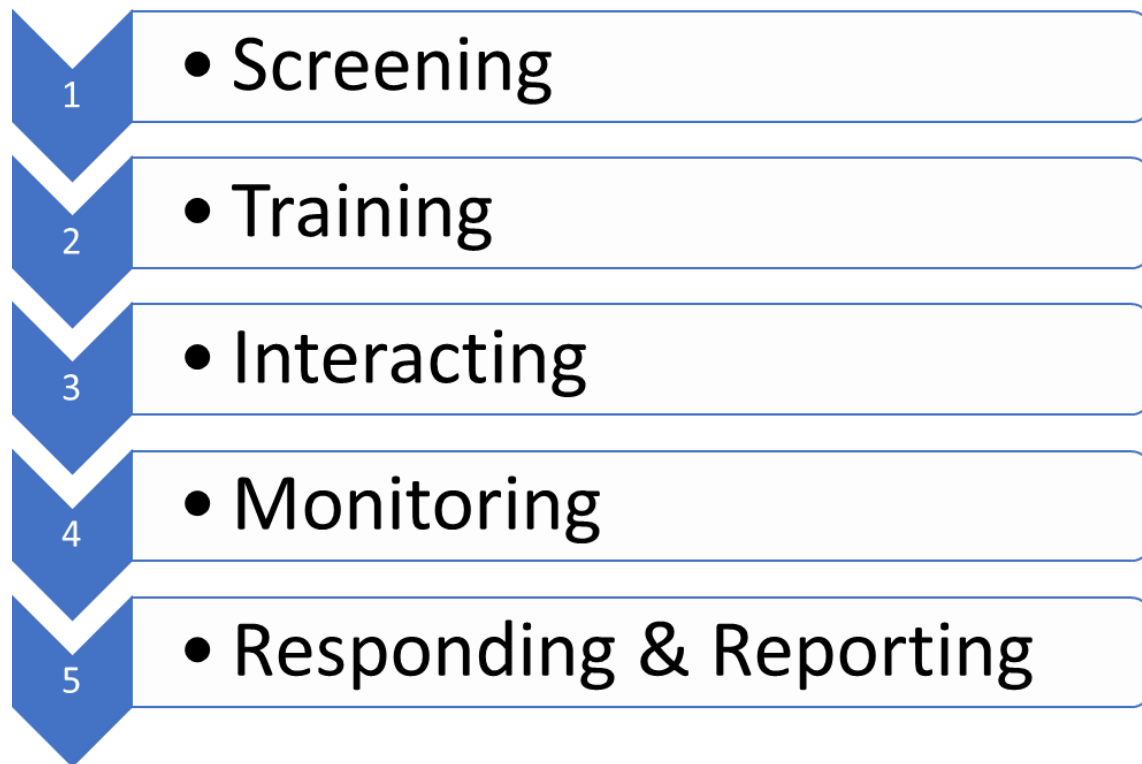
Parents/Caregivers of Junior Volunteers are encouraged to contact their Safety Coordinator or their child's ministry leader with any questions pertaining to these requirements.

Hiring Child Care

On occasion, persons may be hired to provide child care for the church. This will be arranged by a Ministry Leader or the Safety Coordinator. Hired caregivers will be required to complete a background check and sign a copy of this policy. An individual who anticipates being hired for ongoing child care for the church will be required to complete the requirements as a Covered Individual.

Overview of the Minnesota Deanery Five Step Safety System

The church requires all Covered Individuals to complete **SAFETY STEPS 1-2 below** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.



Step One: Screening

Screening is an opportunity to prevent an abuser from ever having contact with children and youth in our programs. Our screening of Covered Individuals in the children and youth ministries includes:

Attendance Minimum

Requiring a six-month minimum of in-person Sunday church attendance before anyone is eligible to serve in positions involving access to minors. Exceptions to the six-month minimum may be allowed with the permission of the dean, rector, and Safety Coordinator.

Background Checks

Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry/Criminal Background checks and renewing them every three years. Depending upon the position or role, differing levels of background checks may be required.

Church Screening

- Satisfactory completion of an application, reference checks, and a face-to-face interview with a church ministry leader.
- Satisfactory completion of a Background Screening Form.

Step Two: Training

Training puts the power to protect in everyone's hands and is an important deterrent to child abuse. Those who work with children or youth must be trained to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, commit to the safe practices specific to the Minnesota Deanery, and learn the procedures for reporting suspected abuse.

Reading Requirements

All Covered Individuals must certify that they have read, understood, and accepted the Minnesota Deanery's policies on the protection of children and youth and sign an acknowledgement form.

Training Requirements

- All Covered Individuals must complete MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training. This training will be renewed every three years.
- All Covered Individuals must attend training provided by the Minnesota Deanery on its policies and procedures at the next available opportunity.

The church recognizes that participating in training on abuse, including sexual abuse, may be difficult for individuals who have experienced abuse. Those who need support in connection with completing training requirements should contact their Safety Coordinator.

Step Three: Interacting

Interacting guidelines help children, youth, and adults feel safe in ministry and help detect problems before they turn into abuse.

Rule of Three

It is our standard practice to schedule two workers per classroom. However, the Rule of Three ensures that Covered Individuals shall not be one-on-one with a minor.

Satisfying the Rule of Three:

Example 1
1 Covered Individual
2 minors (*5 and older*)

Example 2
2 *unrelated* Covered Individuals
1 minor (*any age*)

If there is a time when a Covered Individual is unavoidably alone with a minor, he or she should, except in extenuating and unavoidable circumstances, promptly arrange to come into compliance with the Rule of Three and keep doors open and windows unblocked. Such measures might be necessary where a Covered Individual is briefly alone with a child who is dropped off early or another worker departs unexpectedly.

Supervision

Any time a minor has been entrusted to Covered Individuals, at a church-sponsored event, the church accepts responsibility for the safety and well-being of the minor. Covered Individuals must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of minors in their charge. This includes following the Rule of Three and the worker-to-minor ratios set out in this manual.

No child should ever be left unattended during children’s ministry programming or classes. Minors should not be alone in areas that are not visible or accessible to supervision.

Worker-to-Child/Youth Ratios

The church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children and Youth Ministry programming.

The following worker-to-child ratios are considered best practice in the Minnesota Deanery and are to be pursued in all church events:

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery (Birth-2)	2	Up to 8
Preschool (3-5)	2	Up to 16
Elementary (5-12)	2	Up to 20

The following worker-to-youth ratios are considered best practice in the Minnesota Deanery and are to be pursued in all church events:

Program	Workers	Youth
Youth Events at Church Building	2 unrelated <i>Add one Covered Individual for every additional 1-10 youth</i>	Up to 20
Small Groups	1 adult per group <i>plus at least one other circulating</i>	Small groups of 3-10
Overnight or Away Events	4 - including at least one female and one male <i>Add one Covered Individual for every additional 1-10 youth</i>	Up to 20

If the proper ratio is not present, it is the responsibility of the Covered Individual to notify a ministry leader so that additional individuals may be found or the event cancelled.

Release of Children

Parents will release minors into the care of Covered Individuals. Likewise, Covered Individuals are responsible for releasing minors back into the care of parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities. It is presumed a person who drops off a minor has authority to pick up the minor.

In the event that a Covered Individual is uncertain of the propriety of releasing a minor, they should locate or contact their immediate ministry leader, the Children's Pastor, or the Youth Pastor, before releasing the minor.

Building Safety

The Children's Pastor and/or Youth Pastor is responsible for ensuring that the church building is monitored during all children's ministry or youth events or programming. This may include monitoring of clergy, vestry or parish council, staff members, contracted workers, volunteers and children/youth in classrooms and other locations.

After every programming event, Covered Individuals working the event must ensure that every minor safely leaves, and that every room and restroom is checked and vacant prior to leaving.

Parental Contact and Involvement

Parents/Caregivers who leave a child or youth in the care of Covered Individuals during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, has a severe behavior problem, or is exhibiting separation anxiety lasting more than ten minutes.

Parents are encouraged to visit any services and programs in which their child is involved. Parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs will be required to complete the church's application and screening process.

Bathroom Supervision and Assistance

All Covered Individuals will observe the following:

Diapering of Nursery-Age Children

- Only nursery workers or the child's parent, caregiver, or legal guardian will diaper children of either sex.
- Any special instructions given by parents/caregivers should be recorded on the registration form or name tag.
- Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- Children should be changed at changing stations only and should never be left unattended.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately after a diaper change.

Bathroom Use by Preschool Children

- When children are taken into bathrooms, the bathroom door must be left open.
- Children must never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- Children may be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- Accidents should be handled by reassuring the child, and asking another caregiver to notify parents/caregivers if a change of clothing is needed.

Bathroom Use by School-Age children

School-age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance as needed. However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their capabilities. The Rule of Three should be followed.

If a child requires assistance, the Covered Individual should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

Special Needs Assistance for Young Children

A parent/caregiver should be called to assist their child with special needs for bathroom use or diaper changing. Parents/caregivers of children with special needs may also leave written instructions for Covered Individuals caring for their child for personal needs.

Interpersonal Interaction

Verbal Communication

Verbal interactions between caregivers and minors should be positive and uplifting. Covered Individuals should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents/caregivers in the spiritual growth and development of their children.

To this end, Covered Individuals should not talk to minors in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, sexual, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, Covered Individuals are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of minors.

This verbal interaction policy does not prohibit appropriate and constructive discipline or redirecting of a minor.

Physical Interactions

Appropriate physical affection between Covered Individuals and children or youth is important for young people's development, and is generally suitable in the church setting. However, physical contact should be for the benefit of the minor and never based on the emotional needs of the Covered Individual.

- Physical contact and affection are permissible only when the Rule of Three is being followed. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
 - Pats on the back, handshakes, high-fives, and other forms of appropriate touch are generally acceptable in the church setting. Hugs should be given only when initiated by the child or youth, should be of short duration, and may not involve any inappropriate touch.
- A minor's preference not to be touched must be respected.
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching, or displays of affection must be immediately reported to the Safety Coordinator.
 - Inappropriate interactions include: wrestling, kissing, forcing unwanted affection, sitting in laps (except nursery), commenting on children's bodies, massages, spanking, slapping, or any form of physical discipline.

- Covered Individuals are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others, including Covered Individuals and other children and youth.

Covered Individuals may not engage in conduct that could reasonably be anticipated to cause physical harm to a minor.

Discipline

Church policy prohibits Covered Individuals from using physical discipline in any manner to manage minors' behavior. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by minors.

Inappropriate behavior by minors is to be addressed using non-physical methods. If a situation requires a disciplinary response, Covered Individuals may take appropriate steps to interrupt, stop, or change behavior or actions. However, it is the responsibility of the Children's Pastor and the Youth Pastor to plan and enact appropriate discipline or behavioral consequences.

All Covered Individuals are to respect the dignity and privacy of minors in their care and not discuss a minor's negative behavior with others who have no reason to know - even if doing so seems harmless. Exceptions are for disclosures to those within the church who need to be informed in order to address a situation.

Sexual Ethics

Covered Individuals must take steps to maintain appropriate boundaries with minors. Covered Individuals must comply with the following:

Covered individuals are prohibited from (i) making comments of a sexual, romantic or otherwise intimate nature to or in the presence of a minor; (ii) soliciting, engaging in, or encouraging a dating, sexual or otherwise intimate relationship with a minor; and (iii) engaging in any contact of a sexual nature with a minor. This includes, but is not limited to, kissing, touching of a sexual or otherwise intimate nature, contact of any kind with intimate body parts, nudity, and the solicitation or sharing of images and materials of a sexual nature.

Covered Individuals should never be nude in the presence of children or youth; neither should children or youth be nude in the presence of any other people.

Covered Individuals, children, and youth should change in private, and if public showers are necessary as part of children or youth programming, showering should be done in swim trunks/bathing suits. If any situation may involve the possibility of nudity, Covered Individuals are required to plan necessary safety protocols in advance with the Children's Pastor and/or Youth Pastor as applicable.

It is expected that, from time to time, youth ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to dating, sex, and human sexuality. These lessons will convey the church's views on these topics and must not involve a Covered Individual engaging in any communication that could be perceived to be a sexual overture, grooming, or sexual abuse of a minor.

Covered Individuals are prohibited from possessing, discussing, viewing, or sharing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of any minor.

Guidelines for Individualized Ministry and Mentoring of Youth

The Minnesota Deanery recognizes that meeting the needs of youth may require Covered Individuals to minister or mentor them on an individual basis. The following guidelines must be observed in the course of such ministry and/or mentoring:

- Covered Individuals should follow the Rule of Three and conduct interactions with youth at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed. If a sensitive matter is being discussed that requires a Covered Individual to enter a different room with a youth to allow for a private conversation, the door should remain open, other Covered Individuals should be notified ahead of time and should periodically monitor the situation.

In the rare event that a closed-door meeting must occur, the Covered Individual conducting the meeting should seek to hold the meeting in a room with a window and must inform another on-site Covered Individual. The door must remain unlocked, and the other Covered Individual should wait nearby and check in periodically.

- If a meeting with a youth must occur away from church, the Youth Pastor must be informed in advance. The Covered Individual must ensure that the youth's parents or legal guardians are informed of the meeting and the Covered Individual should not be alone with the youth. They must meet in a

public place or in a home where a parent/guardian is present. The Covered Individual should meet the youth at the location, not picking up or driving the youth to or from the location.

A Covered Individual should not meet individually with a youth outside of the church building more than twice a month. The Youth Pastor and the youth's parents or legal guardians must be notified in advance of each meeting. For mentoring or sponsoring relationships between a Covered Individual and youth, the Youth Pastor must be given updates at least once a month.

In addition to the required safety steps and training outlined in this policy, Covered Individuals providing individualized ministry or mentorship to youth must be well-known at and have attended the church for at least one year, and must have experience volunteering within the church.

Interactions & Relationships Outside of Church Activities

Covered Individuals may interact with minors outside of church activities. Interactions at public events, planned and unplanned, are acceptable, but the parents or legal guardians must be informed these took place.

The church understands that a Covered Individual may have a relationship with a minor that is separate from their role within the church. A Covered Individual must abide by this policy in all church-related activities and may not use any separate relationship with a minor to violate the conduct requirements of this manual.

Electronic Communication

General Guidelines

- Covered Individuals must keep parents or legal guardians informed of ongoing communication occurring between their child and the Covered Individual.
- Phone, text, and social media communication between Covered Individuals and youth should be related to youth ministry activities or should be for ministry purposes.
- Covered Individuals must not disproportionately communicate with an individual youth unless a pastoral situation calls for it *and* a clergy or second youth leader is aware it is occurring.
- Whenever possible, Covered Individuals using electronic communication to interact with youth should do so in a public or group context.

Texts, Email, and Phone Calls

Brief texts, emails, or phone calls between a Covered Individual and an individual youth are appropriate when related to youth ministry activities or when ministerial in nature. If ongoing interaction is necessary, the Covered Individual should do so in person, in accordance with our policies. Should an ongoing text, email, or phone conversation with an individual youth be warranted, the Covered Individual should keep the youth's parents or legal guardians and the Youth Pastor informed.

Social Media

Social media platforms are one of the ways those in youth ministry might connect with youth, whose world is often constructed around social media.

- Covered Individuals should not connect with minors on social media when they are younger than the minimum age established by each social media outlet. (For example, Facebook's minimum age is currently 13.)
- With parental or legal guardian consent, Covered Individuals may engage in healthy interactions with students on social media.
- The Covered Individual should model appropriate behavior both on and off social media.
- The Covered Individual should report any concerns about social media to the Safety Coordinator.

- Covered Individuals should not initiate a social media connection (friending, following, etc.). They may respond should a minor initiate, but they are not required to.
- Covered Individuals should not initiate communication with minors using private messaging or direct message functions of social media. Should a minor send a note in this format, the correct course of action is to respond briefly and follow up using a more appropriate form of communication, according to Minnesota Deanery policy.

Posting Pictures

Photos posted by Covered Individuals on social media platforms are generally limited to group photos and/or individual photos that are part of a series of photos of an event. Covered Individuals should not take selfies with an individual youth. Profile or cover photos that show groups of youth are acceptable. No photos may be taken of someone in an unclothed state.

Virtual Environments

We understand that engaging minors includes not only in-person but also virtual gatherings. Covered Individuals should use the following guidelines:

- The Rule of Three must be followed in all virtual environments.
- All participants, adults and minors, should be fully clothed, including portions of the body that may be “off camera.”
- Adults should not be on a bed or have a bed in the background of their camera. This promotes a sense of safety.
- Covered Individuals may not have suggestive, political, racist, or other similar materials or images on their screens or backgrounds. Minors should be invited into similar standards.
- Virtual gathering links should not be included on any social media or in broad email lists.
- If a minor is sharing inappropriate, graphic, or other harmful material, he or she will be removed from the virtual environment and parents or legal guardians will be contacted.
- If any inappropriate, graphic, or harmful material is shared during the gathering, parents or legal guardians will be immediately contacted.
- Parents or legal guardians must have access to the information about the virtual gathering and their rules for observation must be consistent with those of in-person gatherings.

Additional Guidelines

Gifts

Covered Individuals may provide gifts to minors only to mark special occasions or in light of significant circumstances, and all gifts must be given with the knowledge of the minor's parents or legal guardians. Covered Individuals may never give gifts simply to endear themselves to a child or to seek a personal relationship with that child.

Photography

Covered Individuals may not take or possess photographs, videos or other images or recordings of a participating minor other than as authorized by the church as part of official church activities. Church-authorized imagery is generally limited to recording or photographing church events and activities and should involve group photos and/or individual photos that are part of a series of photos of an event. No photos may be taken of someone in an unclothed state.

Medication, Health, and Safety

If a minor needs assistance taking medication during church events, a parent or legal guardian will be asked to sign a consent and waiver form to permit the church to have Covered Individuals assist the minor. By having a minor participate in a church event or activity, parents/caregivers give the church permission to administer basic first aid and obtain emergency treatment for the minor if a parent/caregiver cannot be promptly reached to arrange such care.

Injuries that occur during child or youth activities should be reported to the Covered Individual's immediate ministry leader or to the Safety Coordinator, and an incident report should be completed. Any unusual or out-of-character behavior displayed by minors should also be reported.

Substances

Covered Individuals are prohibited from using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any Minnesota Deanery facility, while

traveling with minors, or while working with or supervising minors. In addition, it is unacceptable to supply any minor with any alcohol, drugs, tobacco products, or smoking materials.

The church requires Covered Individuals to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco or nicotine products of any kind in their facilities, and while in the presence of minors or their parents/caregivers. This prohibition includes tobacco and nicotine in any format, including but not limited to cigarettes, e-smoking devices, cigars, chewing tobacco or other forms of tobacco or smoking.

Transportation and Travel Considerations

Transportation

Covered Individuals age 23 or over may occasionally be in a position to provide transportation to minors. Covered Individuals shall not transport a minor except when it has been arranged by the church, or with the knowledge and consent of parents/caregivers.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, this Policy does not prohibit carpools involving parents/guardians of minors who may also be volunteers of the church if arranged by the parents/guardians involved in the carpool with advance consent of parents/guardians. Any such carpools are not part of the Covered Individual's activities for the church and, as such, the church has no responsibilities of safety or otherwise in connection with such carpools.

The following guidelines should be strictly observed when involved in the transportation of minors for church activities:

- The Rule of Three should be followed.
- Minors should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to nonpublic places are not permitted except in the event of an emergency or other extenuating circumstances. (Longer trips may require planned stops for gas, lunch, etc.)
- Covered Individuals should avoid physical contact with minors while in vehicles.
- No mobile phones or other mobile devices may be used by the driver while driving.
- No drivers under age 23 may drive minors during church activities.
- A driver must have valid automobile insurance under applicable law.
- A driver must be free of any use or influence of alcohol or controlled substances.
- A driver must follow all applicable driving and motor vehicle laws.

Church Travel

Covered Individuals must comply with all Minnesota Deanery policies when participating in any church-related travel. The trip coordinator is responsible for enforcing policies during trips and has the right to take disciplinary or other action, including, but not limited to, sending a Covered Individual or a minor home because of disregard for Minnesota Deanery policies.

Sleeping Arrangements

It is anticipated that certain Youth Ministry activities may require overnight sleeping arrangements for youth and Covered Individuals, either on or off church property. In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, the Youth Pastor or Safety Coordinator must complete a Supervisory Plan for the activity in advance. Additionally, Covered Individuals must strictly observe the following rules:

- Boys and girls must sleep in separate areas.
- Two Covered Individuals of the same sex as the youth they are supervising must be sleeping in areas for males and females.
- As long as any youth is awake, two Covered Individuals must also be awake to monitor until all are in bed.
- In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each Covered Individual and youth must use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule applies.

Step Four: Monitoring

Monitoring is the ongoing work of maintaining the healthy functioning of the Minnesota Deanery's safety policies. Covered Individuals should feel confident interacting with children, be able to access and remember policies, and encourage each other in keeping the policies.

Screening and **Training** will be monitored at each church by its Safety Coordinator, who will maintain up-to-date records pertaining to these items.

Monitoring procedures pertaining to **Interacting** should include, but are not limited to:

- Rule of Three policy: All children and youth activities shall be designed to adhere to the Rule of Three policy.
- No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the property during or following a church activity.
- Covered Individuals should not conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children or youth.
- In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions should take place in a public place or where other persons are present.
- All Covered Individuals are expected to watch for policy violations and report them.
- An open invitation should be extended to parents or legal guardians to visit at any time unannounced.
- New programs and significant changes to program structure should be carefully reviewed.
- Interaction with children must be kept in full view of others at all times.
- Unused rooms should be locked whenever possible.
- Children and youth should be kept in supervised areas within the church building.

Supervisory Enforcement of Policies

Minnesota Deanery staff members and volunteers who supervise other Covered Individuals are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Minnesota Deanery policies.

Step Five: Responding & Reporting

Responding and Reporting in a prompt manner gives us the power to prevent or stop abuse and potentially gives a child more time to heal.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

The church cannot address child abuse of a minor unless it is made aware of potential abuse. The church is committed to providing safe and secure environments for minors within its churches and during all church activities. A safe environment fosters a culture of reporting relevant information to appropriate civil authorities, as needed, and to the church.

Civil Reporting: All Covered Individuals shall report any knowledge, suspicion, or concerns that child abuse may have occurred to the appropriate law enforcement agency or child protection agency. As a reporter, they may report to either law enforcement or the child protection agency before reporting to the responsible church authority, or may ask a church staff or clergy member for assistance in making a report to civil authorities.

Summary: Report to child protective services (CPS) or law enforcement agencies. You may report to CPS or law enforcement with the assistance of clergy or church staff.

Church Reporting: In addition to reporting to civil authorities, the individual(s) suspecting abuse or neglect should immediately notify the rector, senior warden, and the Safety Coordinator of the suspected abuse. The rector shall notify the bishop. If reporting to the rector, senior warden, and Safety Coordinator is not possible or would present a conflict of interest, a report shall be made to the dean and bishop. Written documentation of the report shall be made using the "Form for Report of Suspected Child Abuse" available from the Safety Coordinator.

Summary: In addition to reporting to the civil authorities, a report should be made to church authorities.

Important Contacts for Reporting

If a child is in danger call police:

Police Department

(Insert number for the local police department.)

For assistance in reporting:

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

(1-800) 422-4453.

To file a report call CPS for the child's county of residence:

Child Protection Services

<https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/services/child-protection/contact-us/>

Responding to a Child Victim

If a child or youth discloses abuse, remember to:

- Respect the child or youth's privacy by finding a safe, non-threatening place to talk. In observance of the rule of three, another adult could be visible but out of hearing range.
- Keep calm, listen, and avoid expressing shock or outrage.
- Let the child or youth know that he or she is believed and, if helpful, that they were brave to disclose.
- Assure the child or youth that the abuse was not his or her fault.
- Avoid questions that could make the child or youth feel responsible or plant ideas that could taint their recollection and account; minors are often vague in their initial disclosure.
- Write down as accurately as possible what the child or youth disclosed; this information can be used in filing the Form for Report of Suspected Child Abuse for the diocese and the Child Protective Services report if warranted.

Steps Following a Disclosure

Upon learning of any potential abuse you do not need to substantiate your suspicions and should not speak to the minor at length about it; instead promptly report according to the above policies. The reporting individual should not undertake to investigate the matter and, out of respect for the privacy of the individuals involved in the matter, should maintain confidentiality of the matter outside of reporting to law enforcement or a child protection agency, and reporting to the proper church leaders according to this policy. The reporting individual may also cooperate with any investigations into the reported alleged conduct.

To assist the church with responding appropriately and in a timely manner to a report, reports should, to the extent possible, identify the alleged victim(s), the alleged accused, and other relevant information.

Summary: Ensure the safety of the child or youth, report to legal authorities, and report to church authorities.

Mandated Reporting Obligations

The church considers all of its Covered Individuals to be mandated reporters in connection with knowledge they obtain about possible child abuse based on or in connection with their services for the church. Mandated reporters must immediately report suspected child abuse (which includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect).

The church will report any abuse or neglect of a minor. Such information must be immediately reported orally to law enforcement or Child Protective Services. Individual criminal penalties may result from failure to make a required report. It is not the role of a reporter to decide if information regarding possible child abuse of a minor is valid or true before reporting it. Reports must be made when the individual knows or has reason to believe that a minor was abused or neglected.

The church seeks to support all individuals who are required to make reports. If you have questions about your duties as a mandated reporter, you may seek assistance from the Safety Coordinator or the rector.

Failure to report is a violation of this policy and is grounds for discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment or volunteer status or termination of church membership.

Reporting Policy Violations

Covered Individuals should also report any relevant information to the Safety Coordinator. This includes, but is not limited to, reporting suspicions or concerns of any violation of a policy in this manual, as well as reporting any suspected or known inappropriate behaviors toward a minor in the church community, regardless of the identity of the accused. Reports should be made immediately to the ministry leader, or to the Safety Coordinator via phone, email, or in person.

If there is a need to report concerns related to the conduct of the Safety Coordinator, the rector, or any clergy or leader, reports may also be to any member of the church's vestry or parish council.

Church Response to Reports and Policy Violations

Upon receipt of any report under this manual, the church will determine appropriate steps for response and care of individuals and the church community. In addition, the church will determine if the mandated reporting policy in this manual requires any further reporting and, if so, will ensure appropriate reporting under that policy.

The church will also consider whether interim measures should be taken to promote the safety and welfare of minors, promote the integrity of the church's response process or any investigation by law enforcement or child protection agencies, and support church community members and Covered Individuals. Interim measures may include, among other things, placing an accused individual on an administrative leave with or without pay.

Confidentiality

To protect the privacy of minors and any victims, the church will strive to keep reports made under this policy confidential. The church reserves the right to share information about someone who has been accused under this policy to the extent that doing so is deemed appropriate by the church to promote the safety and welfare of minors.

Non retaliation

The church prohibits retaliation based on a good-faith report made under this manual or participation in any church process or any legal proceeding related to a report. Concerns of retaliation should be reported to the Safety Coordinator or the rector. If concerns involve the conduct of such individuals, reports should be made to a member of the vestry or parish council.

Statement 1: Acknowledgement & Agreement

I have received and read a copy of the Minnesota Deanery’s Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth and understand the importance of the material in the manual.

I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working in any of the Minnesota Deanery churches.

I understand that the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by the Minnesota Deanery.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill them.

I understand it is my responsibility to review any new guidelines that may be created and distributed.

Covered Individual or Junior Volunteer’s Name (please print)

Covered Individual or Junior Volunteer’s Signature

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if the above individual is a Junior Volunteer)

Date: _____

Statement 2: Background Screening

Please circle your answers. If you circle 'yes' to any question, please comment next to it.

Have you ever:

- 1. Been arrested for, been convicted of, or pleaded guilty to a criminal offense of any kind?

Yes No

- 2. Participated in or been accused, convicted, or pleaded guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct, or had such a record expunged?

Yes No

Has any other member of your household:

- 1. Been arrested for, been convicted of, or pleaded guilty to a criminal offense of any kind?

Yes No

- 2. Participated in or been accused, convicted, or pleaded guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct, or had such a record expunged?

Yes No

Are you aware of any personal traits or tendencies in yourself that could pose any threat to children or youth?

Yes No

I agree to notify the Safety Coordinator of any and all changes to the above statements.

Printed Name

Signature & Date

[Keep for your records.]

Statement 1: Acknowledgement & Agreement

I have received and read a copy of the Minnesota Deanery’s Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth and understand the importance of the material in the manual.

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Covered Individual or Junior Volunteer’s Name (please print)

Covered Individual or Junior Volunteer’s Signature

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if the above individual is a Junior Volunteer)

Date: _____

Statement 2: Background Screening

Please circle your answers. If you circle 'yes' to any question, please comment next to it.

Have you ever:

- 1. Been arrested for, been convicted of, or pleaded guilty to a criminal offense of any kind?

Yes No

- 2. Participated in or been accused, convicted, or pleaded guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct, or had such a record expunged?

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Has any other member of your household:

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Yes No

Are you aware of any personal traits or tendencies in yourself that could pose any threat to children or youth?

Yes No

I agree to notify the Safety Coordinator of any and all changes to the above statements.

Printed Name

Signature & Date

[Sign this copy and return it to the Safety Coordinator.]