



St. Luke Lutheran Church

Knowing the Peace and the Power of the Cross

Comprehensive Child & Volunteer Protection Plan

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I. General Purpose Statement

St. Luke Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Preschool seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices described in this document, our goal is to protect the children of St. Luke Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Preschool from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our volunteers and staff from false accusations.

II. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the following terms are defined:

- “child” or “children” includes all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.
- “student” includes all children participating in Children or Youth Ministries or enrolled in Little Lambs Preschool at St. Luke Lutheran Church.
- “teen” or “youth” includes all children involved in any extracurricular church activity between the ages of thirteen (13) and eighteen (18) years.
- “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children.
- “staff” describes any person directly employed by St. Luke Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Preschool.
- “supervised volunteer” means anyone involved in a regular or on-going church or preschool activity or event, or in overnight activities involving children, under the direct supervision of church or preschool staff.
- “unsupervised volunteer” means anyone involved in a regular or on-going church or preschool activity or event, or in overnight activities involving children, without direct supervision from church or preschool staff (i.e. Bible class teachers, Discipleship Training teachers, so forth).
- “parent helper” or “youth helper” means any parent or youth helping with Youth Ministries, VBS, or Little Lambs Preschool, that volunteers to assist in a classroom or church event on a one-time or irregular basis. Helpers are always under the direct supervision of staff or approved volunteers.
- “program leader” means any person, whether paid or unpaid, who regularly leads a church or preschool program.
- “youth leader” refers to any adult who volunteers regularly with the church youth group, and is classified as an unsupervised volunteer.
- “regular” means on-going, recurring, or more than once.

III. Selection of Workers

Background Checks - All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities as a Church employee, volunteer (either supervised or unsupervised), or program leader will be screened via criminal background check prior to beginning work and annually thereafter. Parent helpers will be exempt from background checks as they will be under the direct supervision of a church or preschool staff member and is a one-time or irregular volunteer. Our mode of obtaining a background check is through the Michigan State Police Internet Criminal History Access Tool (ICHAT). Employees and Staff of Little Lambs Preschool will follow the State of Michigan’s requirements for background check when hired, and then annually thereafter via ICHAT. Before a background check is run, prospective employees and volunteers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing St. Luke Lutheran Church or Little Lambs Preschool to run the check. If an individual declines signing the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children. Background check authorization forms and

results will be maintained in confidential files at the St. Luke Lutheran Church office at Meridian Campus.

Application/References - All employees, volunteers, and program leaders will need to submit an application form, Attachment A, and supply the names and contact information for three references as part of the initial application process. Worker applications may be denied based on information received as a result of reference checks or for any other reason at the discretion of the program administrator.

Waiting Period – All persons who desire to work with children or youth participating in our programs and activities must be regularly involved in the Church or Preschool for six months or more before they will be considered for any volunteer or program leader position involving children or youth.

Disqualifications - A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Little Lambs Preschool Director in consultation with the Senior Pastor (for applicants to the preschool), or the Director of Operations in consultation with the Senior Pastor (for church or other ministry applicants) on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. St. Luke Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Preschool reserves the right to reject any employee/volunteer application.

IV. Two Person Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated workers or volunteers be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. We do not allow minors to be alone (one-on-one) behind closed doors with any volunteer on our premises or in any sponsored activity.

V. Specific Ministry Policies

Church Nursery

See Attachment B, St. Luke Lutheran Church “Nursery Guidelines”, for a detailed policies and procedures for the Church Nursery.

Children’s Ministries

Bible classes, Discipleship Training, Vacation Bible School, Little Lambs Preschool etc.

2 Years – 5th Grade

- All participants in any Children’s Ministries program, other than Little Lambs Preschool, must have on file a St. Luke Lutheran Church “Registration, Permission and Release Form”, Attachment C. This form needs to be renewed each year in September.
- All staff/volunteers must complete an application form and have a completed and approved background check prior to working with children. During the approval process, these volunteers will be supervised by an approved volunteer.
- All staff/volunteers will refrain from speaking in a way that is inappropriate, immoral, or insensitive.

- Youth who are enrolled in sixth grade or higher may volunteer, but will work under the supervision and direction of the Ministry Administrator and other adult volunteers.
- For Vacation Bible School Policies, please refer to the Vacation Bible School Guidelines, Attachment D.
- For Little Lambs Preschool Policies, please refer to the Little Lambs Preschool Handbook.

Youth Ministries

Bible Classes, Discipleship Training, Youth Events, etc.

Grades 6-12

- All participants in any Youth Ministries program must have on file a St. Luke Lutheran Church “Registration, Permission and Release Form”, Attachment C. This form needs to be renewed each year in September.
- All staff/adult and teen/youth volunteers over the age of 18 years must complete an application form and have a completed and approved background check prior to working with youth. During the approval process, these volunteers will be supervised by an approved volunteer.
- All staff/volunteers will refrain from speaking in a way that is inappropriate, immoral, or insensitive.
- All High School youth leaders and chaperones must be at least 21 years old.
- At least two staff or volunteers shall be present at all youth activities and will stay until the last youth has been released.
- Male and female students and staff will not share the same sleeping room (hotel rooms, cabins, etc.) unless they occupy a large open facility (gym floor, etc.).
- Transportation of youth to and from youth events is the responsibility of the parents, or it may be arranged by the staff member responsible for the program.
- During out-of-town events only, high school youth leaders and adult chaperones will be allowed to transport students to daily activities.
- Home visits made by staff or youth leaders will only be made if at least one parent is present.
- The staff or youth leaders are not permitted to date or fraternize with a member of the youth group.

Church or Preschool Sponsored Community Events

Alleluia Adventure, Road Rally, etc.

- All volunteers representing St. Luke Lutheran Church or Little Lambs Preschool must complete the Background Check Form and approval process prior to working any event where children will be present. The staff person in charge of overseeing the event will be responsible for collecting Background Check forms from all volunteers who will be working the event as a representative of St. Luke Lutheran Church or Little Lambs Preschool. This staff person will also ensure that the forms are turned in to the Director of Operations in a timely fashion in order to complete the approval process prior to the day of the event.

VI. Transportation & Off-site Events

- **Preschool Field Trips:**

For all Little Lambs field trips, a parent/adult must be present for each student on the trip. Transportation to and from the trip are the parent/adult responsibility. Little Lambs staff will not provide transportation.

Youth Ministries Events:

Chaperones – Youth Ministries Events will be chaperoned by the staff and volunteers. Volunteers for off-site and/or overnight events will have completed a background check and have been approved as a volunteer by the Director of Operations in consultation with the Senior Pastor prior to the event.

Transportation – Transportation for Youth Events will be the responsibility of the parents, or arranged by the staff responsible for the event. Adult volunteers who drive groups of youth to and from events, must first submitted a copy of a valid driver's license and auto insurance to the Ministry Administrator.

Other Preparedness – Emergency contact information will be collected on all youth participants prior to any off-site or overnight event (Attachment C). Volunteers will be made aware of the location of this information in case of emergency. Volunteer drivers will be made aware of the location and directions to any off-site venue and will be asked to avoid any unauthorized stops to avoid separating the group. The staff member organizing the event will be responsible for bringing along all emergency contact information for all participants in off-site events.

VII. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Workers may, at any time, become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at St. Luke Lutheran Church or Little Lambs Preschool

becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, the suspicion should be reported immediately to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services hotline. This is required by law if the worker is a Mandated Reporter (pastors and preschool teachers) as stipulated by The Michigan Child Protection Law, 1975 PA 238, MCL 722.623. Mandated Reporters must then follow the correct procedures for following up after a report, including the submission of a written report to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services within 72 hours of the observation or incident.

VIII. Mandated Reporter Training

All preschool teachers and pastors at St. Luke Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Preschool will be trained annually on the most current state law requiring people who work with children to report suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services immediately. Training will be guided by the Mandated Reporter Resource Guide published by the Children's Protective Services Program Office and will include the following components:

- What is a Mandated Reporter?
- Responsibilities and Roles of a Mandated Reporter
- Reporting Procedures and Obligations
- What constitutes abuse and/or neglect?
- Confidentiality requirements
- Where to find the Mandated Reporting Hotline Number (855-444-3911) and web address for downloading the DHS-3200 paper report (https://www.michigan.gov/documents/FIA3200_11924_7.pdf)
- Question and Answer Time for staff

IX. General Church and Preschool Campus Safety

- **Secure/Locked Campus** – St. Luke Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Preschool is a secure campus and maintains locked exterior doors during preschool hours (Monday-Thursday; 8:30am-1:30pm). Any person wishing to enter the building must ring one of two intercom systems (one at the Welcome Center entrance and one at the Preschool entrance), which will be answered by the Church or Preschool Staff. At that point, the Staff requests that the visitor make known his/her business and will then direct the visitor to either the preschool or church office.
- **Emergency Safety Guidelines** – Emergency safety guidelines for the church have been established by the Safety Team of St. Luke Lutheran Church and are reviewed/updated annually. Procedures exist for the following situations: Medical Emergency, Tornado/Severe Weather, Fire, Lost or Missing Child, Disruptive/Violent Intruder, and Emergency Lockdown/Evacuation. Emergency procedures for the preschool include Fire/Tornado, and a Crisis Management Plan which covers: Intruder/Active Shooter, Power Outage, Missing Child, Gas Leak, Water Main Break, Winter Storm, Evacuation/Relocation, and Shelter-In-Place.
- **Documentation & Notification** – Necessary documentation of incident reports, and any other paperwork involving the safety and protection of children will be collected and stored in the church office. Parent notification of any incident or event shall be performed by either the worker directly involved or an administrator (Preschool Director, staff, etc.) as deemed necessary. Parents will always be notified either in writing, via email, or via telephone of incidents/accidents in which a child sustains an injury, or when an actual emergency occurs.

Discipline Policy – In accordance with the Little Lambs Preschool Handbook, workers or volunteers may not utilize any form of corporal or physical punishment with children such as: hitting, kicking, pushing, biting, holding down, etc. Verbal abuse including name-calling, public shaming or any other use of inappropriate language is also prohibited. Additionally, any form of restraining a child other than for his/her safety is against the discipline policy. Locking a child into a room/closet, tying a child to an object or other otherwise restraining a child with one's own body for purposes of disciplining a child are all considered as unacceptable restraint. In the event that a child(ren) exhibits dangerous or out-of-control behaviors that are not corrected by re-direction or removal from an area or situation, or other acceptable means, the child(ren)'s parents may be contacted and instructed to immediately pick up their child from preschool or church activity. Any worker or volunteer that engages in inappropriate discipline strategies is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and/or removal from paid or unpaid position.

X. General Training for Workers and Volunteers

All workers and staff with on-going or regular positions at St. Luke Lutheran Church or Little Lambs Preschool will be trained and will participate in subsequent annual training, to be scheduled by program administrators on topics including the following:

- Child Protection Plan (All)
- Mandated Reporter Information and Procedures (only Mandated Reporters)
- Employee Handbook/Preschool Policies (only paid staff)

Volunteers will be asked to review St. Luke Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Preschool's Comprehensive Child & Volunteer Protection Plan document prior to each program year.

XI. References & Other Related Documents

- The Michigan Child Protection Law, 1975 PA 238, MCL 722.621 et.seq.
- Mandated Reporter Resource Guide (Michigan Dept. of Health & Human Services)
- St. Luke Lutheran Church Safety Guidelines (St. Luke Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Preschool)
- Little Lambs Preschool Handbook (St. Luke Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Preschool)

XII. Attachments

- A – Children/Youth Ministries & Little Lambs Preschool Application
- B – Nursery Guidelines
- C – Registration, Permission and Release Form
- D – Vacation Bible School Guidelines