



Safe Church Policy

Awareness, Prevention and Response Plan

Adopted by Council on August 7 , 2023

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1. Introduction

A. Vision

As a community of Christ-followers, Bethel Christian Reformed Church (Bethel CRC Edgerton) seeks to be a place where each person can experience the love, compassion, healing, and forgiveness that God pours out on us in Jesus Christ. This means being a congregation where all can worship and grow in their faith free from abuse and where those who have been victimized by abuse can receive support in their journey toward healing. In instituting this policy, we commit to protecting and supporting the value and dignity of each person, especially the most vulnerable among us, and to being a community that makes every effort to prevent abuse in our midst.

B. Scope

This policy is intended to systematically prevent all forms of abuse and the misuse of power within our congregation and ministries.

C. Purpose of this Policy

1. To educate staff, leaders, and volunteers about abuse, the dynamics of power, and especially the responsibility required by people in positions of power.
2. To ensure that clergy, elders, deacons, staff members, and volunteer leaders are following appropriate boundaries and have appropriate structures of accountability and support.
3. To reflect the high value that Jesus places on those who are vulnerable. As Christ's church, we reflect Christ by ensuring that honor and dignity are shown to every person created in God's image.
4. To provide a safe place for any person to come forward with a disclosure of abuse and receive help.
5. To equip the church leadership and congregation with clear guidelines for how to respond effectively with justice and compassion to situations of abuse.
6. To create opportunities to talk about abuse and increase awareness. Abuse thrives in silence and secrecy, and we must not let it thrive in our communities (Eph. 5).
7. To practice the diligence required as the church and also to abide by the laws of our state or province, and country.
8. To satisfy requirements from insurance companies and to limit the risk of abuse or harm.

2. Definitions

A. Misconduct

As a church, we are committed to holding our leaders and volunteers to the highest standard of behavior. Therefore, the following definitions of abuse go beyond legal definitions to include any form of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, misuse of spiritual authority, sexually inappropriate behavior, neglect, and abuse of office. These are behaviors that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers, and they taint the office held by the offender.

1. Physical Misconduct is:

- a. Threatened harm or non-accidental injury inflicted on a minor or vulnerable adult, or
- b. Offensive or harmful contact with an adult;
- c. Physical misconduct is sometimes a single event, but more often a chronic pattern of interacting with a minor or an adult.

2. Sexual Misconduct is:

- a. Exploiting or grooming (preparing) a minor or an adult – regardless of consent or circumstances – for the purpose of sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy with the result of either sexual gratification or power and control over the minor and/or adult;
- b. Unwelcome touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between co-workers, co-

- volunteers, or
- c. Sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between a supervisor and a subordinate who serve together in a church program or church ministry.
 - d. The development of or the attempt of a ministry leader to develop a sexual or emotional relationship with a participant in the ministries of the church.

3. Emotional Misconduct is:

A pattern of behavior in which a person insults, humiliates, and manipulates an individual or group in order to establish or maintain control over them. Emotional misconduct includes:

- Threatening a person's safety, property, or loved ones;
- Isolating a person from family, friends, and acquaintances;
- Demeaning, bullying, belittling, shaming, or humiliating a person;
- Delivering constant criticism; or
- Emotionally blackmailing or harassing a person.

4. Spiritual Misconduct is:

A form of emotional and psychological abuse, characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behavior in a religious context. Spiritual misconduct may include:

- manipulation and exploitation by appeal to religious convictions and beliefs,
- censorship of decision making,
- requirements for secrecy and silence,
- coercion to conform [inability to ask questions]
- requirement of obedience to the abuser
- the suggestion that the abuser holds a 'divine' position
- isolation as a means of punishment.

B. Concepts of Abuse of Power

Power: Power is the ability to influence or affect an outcome. We all have power as human beings; some of us are given more power as a result of our role or our status within a community. When power is stewarded well, it brings flourishing to all people as an expression of the shalom of the kingdom of God.

Abuse of power: Abuse of power is misusing power to harm another person, or using power and influence for personal gain at the expense of another person. Power can be used to harm another person intentionally or through ignorance, subtly or overtly, to advance one's own desires without regard for the needs or desires of others in ways that disturb the flourishing of others. At the core of all types of abuse are behaviors related to acquiring, maintaining, and misusing power and control. The same power dynamics show up in all types of abuse, whether it be sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, or spiritual abuse.

C. Position Titles

Safe Church Team: The Safe Church Team, shall have at least two people, with one person being an ordained elder of the church, and all individuals having experience or training reflecting competency in one or more of the following:

Abuse of Power, Trauma-informed Ministry, Healthy Boundaries, Circle of Grace program, Domestic Abuse/Intimate Partner Violence, and/or Restorative Practices.

Ministry Leader: Any person, paid or volunteer, ordained or un-ordained, in a position of leadership over an area or aspect of ministry (this includes, but is not limited to, pastors, directors, elders, deacons, Gems and Cadet leaders, youth leaders and Bethel CRC Edgerton Ministry/Committee chairpersons).

Ministry Staff Leader/Pastor: Any paid staff, pastor, or director who has a position of spiritual authority over other volunteers or members of the church.

Adult Volunteer: Any volunteer 18 years or older who leads or assists with ministry programming.

Premises Monitor: A volunteer specifically tasked with monitoring each group of children or youth that does not have two adults present. Checks on each group must be done at least once per session.

Helper: A youth who assists a volunteer in a program.

Child: Children 0 - 11 years of age.

Youth: Children from 12 to 17 years of age.

Vulnerable Adult: A person 18 years or older who is unable to protect himself or herself from abuse, neglect, or exploitation because of a mental or physical impairment or advanced age (see Appendix A for additional information).

3. General Guidelines and Expectations

All who serve in the life of the church are called to use their position and power, not in ways that lord it over others or seek to control others, but in ways that are patterned after Christ himself. According to Philippians 2, Christ did not consider equality with God as something to be used to his own advantage, but used his power for the thriving of others. These guidelines are designed to help ministry leaders steward their position and power well and cultivate cultures that resist abuse.

- A. All ministry staff leaders/pastors shall commit to participating in abuse of power training within 3 months of being hired as well as a refresher course every 5 years.

- B. All ministry staff leaders/pastors, adult volunteers, and youth ages 16-17 will agree to a criminal background check, and Central Registry/Child Abuse registry check prior to their time of service (see Appendix E). Background checks will be refreshed in years ending in 0 and 5 (i.e. 2025, 2030).
- C. All ministry staff leaders/pastors, adult volunteers, and youth ages 16-17 must attend a yearly training session on the Safe Church Policy. Training sessions will be held at the beginning of each church program year and thereafter as needed.
- D. Topics related to abuse prevention, healthy boundaries, and support for survivors will be addressed at least annually in sermons, newsletters, prayers, and other areas of church life.
- E. Felony convictions are wide-ranging from theft, drug trafficking, or physical assault, each with varying degrees of harm caused; the uniqueness and level of risk of each conviction should be carefully assessed should this person be given the privilege of doing ministry with those who are vulnerable. A person with a felony conviction, other than a sexual conviction, may serve in ministry, only with another approved adult present at all times. For those with a felony conviction to be considered as a volunteer, the following is required:
 - a. A signed letter from a psychologist or counselor indicating that the person is not a danger to the community;
 - b. A covenant of accountability and support outlining the terms and conditions under which the person may volunteer.
- F. All ministry leaders and volunteer leaders are required to report any suspected abuse of a minor (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect) to the civil authorities. For more guidance, see *Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse from a Child* in Appendix C.
- G. All ministry leaders and volunteer leaders are required to use their access to the church internet and technology belonging to the church (computers, laptops, cell phones, etc.) in ways that are legal, reflect godly conduct, and conform to network etiquette, laws and courtesies.
- H. The church may have funds available to provide financial assistance for counseling for those who have been victimized by abuse. For more information, speak to the President of Deacons.
- I. Information about domestic violence and about where to get help in situations of domestic violence are posted in restrooms.
- J. The name and contact information of the person to whom to report abuse or suspected abuse will be posted in public and visible places. This may include on a bulletin board, in the church newsletter, on the church website, and/or in the church office.

4. General Guidelines for Safe Supervision of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

These guidelines are designed to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults from harm while attending and participating in church-sponsored events.

A. Two-Adult Rule & The Rule of Three:

At all church-sponsored functions involving the supervision of children, youth, or vulnerable adults, if possible, either the *Two Adult Rule* or the *Rule of Three* will be practiced. No staff or volunteers should be alone with a single child, youth, or vulnerable adult in locations where they cannot be clearly observed by others.

1. **The Two-Adult Rule:** If possible, at least two, screened adults must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

2. **The Rule of Three:**

When there is not a capacity to abide by the *Two-Adult Rule*, it may be acceptable to use the *Rule of Three*: At least three individuals must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. One of the three must be a screened adult.

B. One-to-One Meetings:

In children and youth ministry, there are times when a ministry leader or volunteer leader seeks to meet one-to-one with a youth or child. Because the imbalance of power is particularly pronounced when a child or youth is alone with an adult, it is crucial that ministry leaders and volunteer leaders follow safe protocols.

1. When possible, the meeting should only take place between a student and ministry leader/volunteer of the same gender.
2. The meeting should take place in a public place (ie. restaurant, coffee shop, bookstore, etc.) with the permission and knowledge of the parents.
3. The ministry leader or volunteer should notify the director of the ministry or another designated church leader and also record the meeting in a log that is reviewed monthly by the director or supervisor of the ministry.
4. Transportation by one adult leader of one minor should be avoided. In the event that it is unavoidable, every attempt will be made to contact the parents/guardians of the child or youth before transportation takes place.

C. Discipline:

When children or youth act out during church events, ministry leaders and volunteers will take care to address the misbehavior in ways that are consistent with the following guidelines:

1. Corporal punishment is not permitted (spanking, pinching, hitting).
2. Parents are to be informed whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehavior develops.

3. An aide or parent should be involved in classrooms where misbehavior is an ongoing problem.
4. Appropriate types of discipline are to be reviewed with volunteers/staff annually.
5. Whenever possible, leaders should address disruptive behavior by:
 - redirecting the child/youth to another activity
 - helping the child/youth focus on a more acceptable behavior
 - taking the child/youth aside if another adult volunteer/staff person is available to assist

D. Guidelines for Using Electronic Communication (Social Media Messaging, Email, or Texting):

Electronic communication (email and texts) and use of social media has become the preferred means for communication for many people, especially youth. While seeking to use technology to encourage good connections between ministry leaders/volunteers and youth, it is also important to provide guidelines that safeguard youth from potential abuse. To that end, all ministry staff leaders and volunteers will abide by the following Electronic Communication and Social Media Usage policy in their interactions with youth and children.

1. Communication should not take place with young people between the hours of 9:00 pm and 7:00 am or on staff members' days off, unless in an emergency.
2. Once permission is given via the annual media release/consent form (see Appendix G), staff and volunteers (small group leaders, mentors, coaches and children's group leaders) can have access to youth contact information.
3. Emails, messages, texts, or phone calls should be short to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event.
4. If a digital communication raises any child protection concerns, the staff or volunteer will inform the Safe Church Committee.
5. When a volunteer is required to leave a ministry involving youth due to volunteer's misconduct of any kind, staff should require that this volunteer not contact any youth - and require that all youth contact information must be removed from that adult volunteer's devices.

E. Guidelines for Social Media Groups:

Each ministry group/class may have a Social Media group provided they follow the guidelines below:

1. The group must be "closed" or "private" so that it is not public information. Privacy settings on photographs should be set to ensure that only members of the group see them.
2. Ministry staff/volunteers may not use any image of a child or youth without written consent of the parents and only in ways that protect the value and dignity of those pictured.
3. The group must be monitored by staff/volunteers who have admin rights.
4. Young people, staff, and volunteers may become a member of this group provided they are 13 or over.

5. While direct 1:1 messages should be avoided between youth and volunteer leaders, communication can occur openly through comments and posts on the page.
6. Church events can be posted on the page.
7. Church volunteers are forbidden to post or distribute personal identifiable information of any child under the age of eighteen. Personal identifiable information includes but is not limited to: full name, home address, email address, telephone number or any information that would allow someone to identify or contact a child or that would jeopardize their safety or well-being in any way.
8. As an exception to this policy, a child whose parent or other legally responsible adult has signed a media release/consent form (Appendix G) may be identified by name in photographs or videos posted to an official social media account.

5. Program-specific Guidelines for Abuse Prevention of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

A. Nursery Guidelines Pertaining to Child Abuse Prevention

These nursery guidelines are designed to protect children from harm while they are placed in the care of nursery volunteers during church-related events.

1. A nursery supervisor will be assigned to each shift. Only adults who are screened and have completed the Safe Church policy training sessions will be able to serve as the adult volunteer in the nursery.
2. No child should be left unattended in the nursery at any time.
3. Parents must sign in each child on the designated form when they arrive in the nursery. Special care instructions (including restroom assistance) must be noted on the sign-in form. A name tag must be attached to each child and to each child's diaper bag.
4. Posted diaper changing procedures should be followed for infants. Youth helpers are not to change diapers. When changing a diaper, it should be done at the diapering station and within eyesight of other caregivers. An adult supervisor should provide minimal assistance for a child who is able to use the bathroom. Only one child should use the bathroom at a time.
5. Accidents or illnesses must be reported immediately to the child's parent/guardian. An Appendix H) should be filled out in case of accident or injury, one copy for the child's parents, and one for the Nursery Coordinator.
6. Children in infant or toddler nurseries are to be picked up only by their caregiver/sibling, or by the person who brought them unless prior arrangements have been made.

B. Guidelines For Children's programs on Sundays

1. The Circle of Grace or a similar program teaching body safety will be provided for one to four Sundays every year for all children and youth. This training will be appropriate to the child's age group.
2. A premises monitor is assigned to randomly observe groups where the **Rule of Three** is practiced.
3. Bathroom procedures:
 - a. **Preschool:** Children are not to go to the bathroom by themselves. Rather, they are to choose a buddy that can accompany them to the bathroom, along with a class helper, if available (this can include the premises monitor so that there is always the correct number of adults overseeing children in the main space). Should a child require assistance, keep the door open to the stall, stand in the doorway and assist. No adult should ever be in a closed stall with a child.
 - b. **Elementary:** Children are not to go to the bathroom by themselves. Rather, they are to choose a buddy that can accompany them to the bathroom.

C. Guidelines For Middle and High School Programs

1. Parents/guardians must return the Participation/Release Form (Appendix G) to the director of youth programming at the beginning of each church program year. Program leaders will inform parents of relevant policies either via a letter or a parent meeting.
2. For scheduled classes and events:
 - a. At programs and functions involving the supervision of youth, at least three individuals must be present in each separate classroom; at least one of the three individuals must be a screened adult.
 - b. During scheduled classes or events, group leaders should know where the youth are at all times.
 - c. If a young person leaves an event without permission, the parents/guardian will be called immediately.

6. Guidelines for Pastoral Visitation

Formal pastoral care is care carried out by church representatives - ministers, elders, deacons, or a pastoral care team, on behalf of the church community. Such care is an important ministry of the church, reflecting the love, compassion, and presence of Christ to those who participate in the ministries of the church.

Some forms of pastoral care involve one-on-one visitation, such as with those who are experiencing a time of suffering or grief, with those who are housebound, or with those in the hospital. In these cases, pastoral visits are made to offer spiritual friendship, help, support, and contact with the community of faith. These visits may include practical help, giving information, and/or supporting people as they make difficult decisions. Listening well is fundamental to all good pastoral care.

The following guidelines are provided to ensure safe and healthy practices of pastoral visitation:

1. All pastoral care visitors must have taken the annual Safe Church Policy Training.
2. If a pastoral care visitor meets alone 1:1 with a congregant, they must log their visit in an active registry.
3. In the interest of confidentiality, all records of pastoral care visits should be kept secure. Records should be minimal, including the name of the person visited, the date, and a brief indication of the reason for the visit.
4. When a pastoral care visitor believes the person being visited may have a 'dementia-like' condition, a pastoral care card (with the name of the visitor(s), address of church, and contact info) must be left at the residence.
5. All pastoral care visitors will honor the limits of their role in giving care, referring congregants as the situation requires to the services of counselors, spiritual directors, and others who are better trained and resourced to meet a congregant's needs.
6. The Pastoral Care Team Leader, Safe Church Team Leader, or Council chair is responsible for overseeing that risk is being assessed and these pastoral care guidelines are properly adhered to.

7. Responding to Abuse

A. Reporting/Responding to Disclosures and Allegations of Abuse of Minors or Vulnerable Adults

The following steps are to be followed in cases of suspected abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult. See also Appendix C: *Responding to Disclosure of Abuse from a Child* and the CRCNA Safe Church Ministry's *Responding to Abuse Toolkit* (available on www.crcna.org).

1. All ministry leaders/volunteers who have a reasonable suspicion of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult are responsible to report it within 24 hours to the Child Protective Services/Children's Aid Society 24-hour hotline at (844) 880-1574 or submit online here: <https://tnt09.agileapps.dhs.state.mn.us/networking/sites/880862836/MAARC>. If you are uncertain of whether what you heard or saw constitutes evidence of abuse, consult with a member of Bethel CRC Edgerton's Safe Church Team (see Appendix B: Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse for guidance).
2. If a minor or vulnerable adult is in immediate physical danger (either on church property or off the property) then the police (911) should be notified immediately.
3. The ministry leader/volunteer who suspects abuse should also contact the Safe Church Team leader to fill out an incident report (Appendix H: Accident or Incident Report) in order to record their observations and follow-up actions. This documentation will be kept in a confidential, locked location in the church office.

4. Neither the ministry leader/volunteer nor the Safe Church Team leader will try to investigate the abuse concerns. Additionally, they will not seek to notify the alleged offender of the allegations against him or her. These tasks should be left to the police and/or CPS/CAS.
5. The Safe Church Team leader should inform the pastor and chair of council of the concerns or allegations of abuse. Note that confidentiality is important in all cases of abuse but especially when a minor is involved (see Appendix D: Confidentiality for protecting confidentiality and need-to-know reporting).
6. If the abuse happened during a church/ministry-sponsored activity or by a ministry leader/volunteer, in addition to ensuring that the police and/or CPS/CAS have been contacted, the Safe Church Team leader shall notify the church's insurance agent and legal counsel.
7. Together with the pastor and the chair of council, the Safe Church Team leader will develop a plan for responding to the abuse in ways that provide care for the one who has been victimized by abuse and respects the dignity of all involved. The plan will include:
 - a. Putting the ministry leader on administrative leave with or without pay (or suspending a volunteer) for up to 90 days or until the conclusion of the investigation, whichever is sooner.
 - b. Providing support and care for the minor and their family. This should be done in a way that puts the needs of the minor and his/her family first.
 - c. Determining who will be the primary contact with the police and/or CPS/CAS.
 - d. Determining how to deal with media inquiries.
 - e. Contacting the classical Safe Church Coordinator and/or the denominational Safe Church Ministry (safechurchministry@crcna.org) for further counsel.
8. After the accused has been contacted by the authorities and the investigation is underway, the elders will provide an opportunity for the accused to respond to the allegations.
9. If the accused is found guilty or admits guilt, the elders may (1) subject a determined abuser (hereafter abuser) to further suspension, deposition, or termination of employment, or (2) take such other action against the abuser as the circumstances may dictate.
10. Should the determined abuser be an office bearer, the elders will follow the specifications for admonition and discipline in the Church Order, Articles 82-84.
11. Subject to the best interest of the person victimized by abuse, the governing body should notify the congregation in writing if they conclude that a church leader has perpetrated abuse. This notice should protect the identity and confidentiality of any innocent parties, including the person who was victimized by abuse. This written communication should

be pastoral, succinct, and objectively factual. Referencing public police reports, charges, or court verdicts may be used.

12. If law enforcement decides not to investigate or charge an adult leader of the congregation who has been accused of abusing a child or vulnerable adult, an independent investigation should be considered in consultation with legal counsel and Safe Church Ministry.

B. Responding to Allegations of Abuse of Adults

If an adult (the claimant) reports abuse to a member of a Safe Church Team, the pastor, or a member of the council, the Safe Church team leader, the pastor, and the elders (or a few members of the council) will do the following:

1. Assign the claimant an advocate, of their approval, who can walk alongside, support, and represent the claimant throughout the reporting and investigation process.
2. Meet with the claimant and/or the advocate to hear the complaint, the impact it has had on the complainant and what the claimant feels needs to happen for them to feel safe at Bethel CRC Edgerton again. The claimant may present their testimony orally but should also submit their statement in writing or alternatively, an incident report can be filled out at the meeting and signed by the claimant. The written statement or incident report will be kept in a confidential, locked location in the church office.
3. Suspend the accused from their duties without prejudice until the allegations have been investigated.
4. Based on the information gathered, develop a plan for assessing the veracity of the allegations. Ordinarily, the plan will involve at least one of the following processes:
 - a. An informal response led by a designated investigation team who meets with the accused to follow up on the allegations. The conversation shall include:
 - i. A report of the event as the claimant experienced it
 - ii. An account of how the claimant was impacted by the accused's actions
 - iii. An opportunity for the accused to respond to the allegations
 - iv. A request that the accused not contact the claimant directly until further notice.
 - v. A report of the conversation, detailing the accused's response that is filed with the incident report.
 - b. An advisory panel process exploring the gravity and probability of the allegations of abuse (the classical Safe Church Coordinator or the denominational Safe Church Ministry office is available to help assemble the panel)
 - c. An independent investigation into the allegations of abuse (the denominational Safe Church Ministry office will keep a list of reputable investigators). It is strongly recommended that councils make use of a third-party investigator when:
 - i. The accused is a prominent leader in the community or region such that

- ii. impartiality is especially elusive;
 - iii. The accusations consist of multiple victims or multiple jurisdictions;
 - iii. Real or perceived conflicts of interest make impartiality especially elusive.
 - d. If the accused is an office bearer, the elders/council will follow the *Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader* provided by the CRC's Safe Church Ministry.
5. Based on the information gathered (and the recommendations of the informal investigation team, the advisory panel or the third-party investigators), the Safe Church Team leader, claimant's advocate, pastor, and elders (or a few council members) will determine a plan of action for responding to abuse. If the allegations are found credible, the plan will include:
- a. A determination of appropriate measures of discipline and opportunities for restoration. This could include suspension of church leadership for a period of time, counseling, abuse of power training, mentoring, oversight and accountability, a written apology to the claimant, or if an office bearer is involved, deposition.
 - b. A plan for providing ongoing care and accountability for the accused.
 - c. A plan for providing ongoing care and support for the claimant.
 - d. Provisions for counseling for the claimant.
 - e. If the claimant desires, an opportunity to participate in a restorative conversation with members of the council, members of the church, and/or, the accused (Information on Restorative Circle Processes may be found at crcna.org/safechurch/restorative).
6. Throughout the process, every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality and dignity of the claimant and the accused.
7. The classical Safe Church Coordinator and the denomination Safe Church Ministry office are available for support, counsel, and resources throughout the process.

Appendix A: Definitions

Child Abuse

Harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare that occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment, by a parent, a legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare or by a teacher, a teacher's aide, or a member of the clergy.

Child Neglect

Harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare that occurs through either of the following:

- a. negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care, or
- b. Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure of the parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk.

Vulnerable Adult

MN State Statute Section 626.5572 subd. 21: A vulnerable adult is defined as: a person 18 years or older who: • receives certain services from a qualified provider. OR. • Regardless of services received, possesses physical, mental, or emotional infirmity or dysfunction. Because of the dysfunction or infirmity and the need for care or services, the individual has an impaired ability to protect the individual's self from maltreatment.

Appendix B: Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

Note: Children rarely exhibit just one sign indicating that they are the victims of abuse. Some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes, or the after-effect of other kinds of trauma in their lives. Conversely, it is possible for abuse to be taking place without the appearance of any symptoms because of the child's ability to mask or deny what is very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, several symptoms appearing at once *may* be an indication of abuse.

- Complaints of pain, irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom; smearing feces on walls or objects
- Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck; failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort; hiding bruises
- Unusual fears: a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences
- Poor concentration in classroom; inability to focus
- Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviors, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing
- Engaging in self-injury, engaging in excessive masturbation or masturbation in a public setting
- Acting enraged and out of control; expressing anger through destruction
- Shyness or fear about physical touch
- Exhibiting sexual behavior beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in a sexual manner with other children or adults
- Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations; bullying others
- Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions
- Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting
- Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events because of being punished
- Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism
- Hyper-vigilance, excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled
- Preoccupation with fire and setting fires
- Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight

Appendix C: Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse from a Child

For informational purposes, the following set of guidelines pertains to information that a child may wish to disclose to an adult.

1. If a child asks to talk with you at church, provide a room (with a window) in which to speak privately.
2. Listen carefully to what the child tells you and respond in a supportive, nonjudgmental manner. Disclosing abuse is a scary thing for children, and they need to know they are supported.
3. Do not appear frightened or disgusted by the child's story, since this may cause the child to stop talking or to believe you are upset with him or her.
4. Avoid asking leading questions. Examples of what you could say: "Can you tell me more?" "Is there anything you need to add?" Do not try to convince the child that the story isn't true or that it didn't happen the way he or she reports it did.
5. Do not attempt to assess the truthfulness of the child's disclosure—that will be for trained professionals to decide. Assure the child you believe him/her and that you care about him/her.
6. Tell the child that whatever happened was not his or her fault and reassure the child that he/she does not deserve to be hurt by anyone.
7. Do not tell or suggest to the child that he or she has been abused.
8. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.
9. Do not promise **not** to tell anyone. Tell the child that you need to find help so the incident can be prevented from happening again.
10. Do not frighten the child by talking about police involvement or medical examinations to verify the complaint. Instead, share with the child that other people need to know what happened and that they will talk to the child later.
11. Do not ask the child to show you any bruises that are beneath the child's underwear or clothing; observe only those bruises that are accessible.
12. If you feel comfortable doing so, speak to the child and offer support in the following weeks and months.

Appendix D: Confidentiality

In order to protect the dignity and well-being of any person who has been victimized by abuse, it is important that their identity is kept confidential. The following measures are implemented to protect the privacy of all parties and to ensure that information about any alleged act is limited to essential persons:

- A. Need-to-Know: Those positions in the need-to-know category include the following: chair of council, pastor, the pastoral care elders for the claimant and accused, and the Safe Church Team/Abuse Prevention and Response Team.
- B. Situations of abuse involving minors or vulnerable adults require sensitive care and full transparency with law enforcement investigations. In situations of abuse involving minors or vulnerable adults, there shall be a designated Safe Church Team member, pastor, or elder who consults the CRCNA Safe Church Ministry or a Classis Safe Church Coordinator.
- C. The names and information in any abuse allegations shall be limited to the positions listed in paragraph A. Need to Know on this page. Any request to release names of any involved party must be first cleared by the congregation's legal counsel.
- D. Discussion by Council or Committees of Council shall be conducted without the actual names of involved persons being used. Instead, descriptions such as "reporter", "alleged offender", and "claimant" shall be used.
- E. A liaison between the legal authorities or Child Protective Services/Children's Aid Society and the church staff/council will be appointed.
- F. After law enforcement has officially charged someone of a crime or after a legal decision has been made, there will be a communication outlining ways that the church and community may be able to move forward with respect and responsible ways to process the harm within the congregation and community.

Appendix E: CHILDREN & YOUTH WORKER APPLICATION FORM

This application is to be completed by all adults in positions of power and/or who could have access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults. An interview may also be conducted.

Circle the program(s) you are willing to serve, or will be serving with:

Nursery Children's Worship Sunday School Middle School Youth Group
High School Youth Group Friendship Program Other _____

General Information:

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Do you regularly attend our worship services? Yes / No

If yes, when did you start attending? (Approx. date) _____

Ministry Information:

I have chosen to work in the ministries indicated above because . . .

Briefly describe what it means to you to be a follower of Jesus Christ:

Briefly describe what it means to you to Christ-like in your ministry responsibilities:

References: List 2 references whom you have known for at least 2 years, persons who are not related to you but who have specific knowledge of your character and ability to work with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

1. **Reference #1 Name:** _____

Email/Phone: _____

Nature of Association: _____

Length of Time Known: _____

2. **Reference #2 Name:** _____

Email/Phone: _____

Nature of Association: _____

Length of Time Known: _____

Personal Disclosure Information: *Please circle the appropriate response.*

1. Have you ever been arrested, convicted, or plead guilty to a crime? Yes / No

If yes, please explain:

2. Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the last 12 months? Yes / No

3. Is there any fact, circumstance, or pattern involving your background that would make it inappropriate for you to serve with minors or would compromise the integrity of the church?

Yes / No

If yes, please explain:

4. Have you ever participated in, or been accused, convicted or pleaded guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct? Yes / No

Church History and Prior Ministry Involvement:

List previous church work involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults (*list church name, city, state, and type of work performed*) if any:

List previous non-church work involving children, youth, or vulnerable (*list each organization name, city, state, and type of work performed*) if any:

Verification and Release:

I recognize that Bethel CRC Edgerton is relying on the accuracy of the information I provide on

Appendix F: CHILDREN & YOUTH WORKER RENEWAL FORM

Volunteers and Employees

Name: _____

Daytime Phone/Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP _____

Age: _____ 18 or younger _____ 19-25 _____ 26 to 45 _____ 46 or older

Which area(s) of this ministry are you currently involved?

What other areas of this ministry, if any, do you plan to become involved?

Have you at any time ever:

- Been arrested for any reason? _____ Yes _____ No
- Been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest to, any crime? _____ Yes _____ No
- Engaged in, or been accused of, child molestation, exploitation, or abuse? _____ Yes _____ No

Are you aware of:

- Having any traits or tendencies that could pose any threat to children, youth, or others?
_____ Yes _____ No
- Any reason why you should not work with children, youth, or others? _____ Yes _____ No

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," please explain in detail:

Verification and Release:

I recognize that Bethel CRC Edgerton is relying on the accuracy of the information I provide on the Worker Renewal Application form. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that the information I have provided is true and correct.

I voluntarily release the organization and any such person or entity listed on this form from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications. I further authorize the organization to conduct a criminal background check if such a check is deemed necessary.

I agree to abide by all policies and procedures of the organization and to protect the health and safety of the children, youth or vulnerable adults assigned to my care or supervision at all times.

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**PLEASE RETURN this form to the
Safe Church Team Leader or Office Administrator
Thank you!**

Appendix G: PARTICIPATION & RELEASE FORM

We (I) give permission for our (my) child(ren), _____, to participate in Bethel CRC Edgerton's youth ministry events during the months of _____ to _____. In addition, we (I) hereby agree to hold harmless the church or any person in its organization for the result of any negligent, willful, or intentional acts of our (my) child(ren) which requires repair and/or reimbursement of expenses. Further, authorization and permission are given to Bethel CRC Edgerton to furnish the above participant with any necessary food, lodging, and transportation to, from, and during any event which may or may not include student-driven vehicles. While our (my) child is attending an event, we (I) understand and accept that Bethel CRC Edgerton will provide supervision. Further, we (I), the parent(s)/guardian(s) of said participant(s), hereby grant permission to the pastor, youth leader, or an adult volunteer acting on the child's behalf to authorize medical treatment, including but not limited to emergency surgery or medical treatment. In the event of sickness or injury to our (my) child(ren), we (I) assume responsibility for all medical bills, if any occur.

Further, if it is necessary for our (my) child(ren) to return home due to medical reasons or disciplinary action, we (I) assume all transportation costs.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Email/Phone: _____

Hospital insurance? _____ Yes _____ No

Insurance company: _____

Policy and Group Number: _____

Physician: _____

Physician Phone Number: _____

Emergency Contact (name and phone #): _____

Relationship to Youth: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

PHOTO & MEDIA RELEASE FORM

I grant permission to Bethel CRC Edgerton to use photos, videos, or other media of my children in the following ways: Bethel CRC Edgerton website, Facebook page, PowerPoint presentations, and bulletin boards.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date: _____

Appendix H: ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT REPORT

Name of Person(s) Involved: _____

Address of Person(s) Involved: _____

Email/Phone Number: _____

Date and Time of Incident: _____

Name of Parent(s)/Guardian, if applicable: _____

Location: _____

Description of Accident/Incident (i.e., how injured, others involved, type of injury, etc.):

Action Taken:

Report Submitted by: _____ Date: _____

Report Reviewed by Policy Administrator: _____

Please return this form to the church office