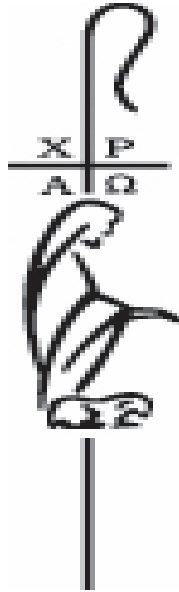


The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
Bel Air, Maryland
Child Protection Policy



Delaware - Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1 Mission Statement Regarding This Child Protection Policy (CPP)

In Baptism, parents and sponsors promise to help baptized children live in the covenant of Baptism and in communion with the Church. Parents and sponsors promise faithfully to bring children to the services of God's house, to teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, to place in their hands the Holy Scriptures and to provide for their instruction in the Christian faith. The purpose of this church's ministry with children and youth is to support parents in fulfilling these responsibilities and to invite into participation those children and youth who have not yet been baptized. This congregation assembles weekly around Word and sacrament. This community of faith provides opportunities for children and youth to learn about Christian faith, to develop an identity as part of the Christian community, and to serve others, following the example of Jesus.

This church's ministry with children and youth begins by striving to provide a safe environment and to provide caring and effective leaders. In an effort to promote this safe environment, the congregation binds itself to the Child Protection Policy described in this document. To protect the safety of our children and youth, employees and volunteers will be screened as to their acceptability for working with children and youth. They will follow the guidelines set forth in this Child Protection Policy. The Church Council and the Child Protection Policy Committee (CPPC) is committed to implementing and following this Child Protection Policy.

2 Definitions

2.1 Section I – Church Definitions

Any reference to “church”, “congregation,” or “preschool” shall refer to The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Bel Air, Maryland and its preschool.

2.2 Section II - Child Protective Services Definitions

2.2.1 According to Maryland Child Protective Services, child abuse includes any of the following:

- Physical injury not necessarily visible on a child under circumstances that indicate that a child's health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed.
- The failure to give proper care and attention to a child including leaving a child unattended where the child's health or welfare is harmed or a child is placed in substantial risk of harm.
- An act or acts involving sexual molestation or exploitation whether physical injuries are sustained or not.
- Identifiable and substantial impairment of a child's mental or physiological ability to function.
- Finding credible evidence that has not been satisfactorily refuted that physical abuse, neglect or sexual abuse occurred.

2.2.2 The definition of child sexual abuse or exploitation is:

“The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of any child to engage in any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of any sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer, depicting or filming, of any sexually explicit conduct or the rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, prostitution, statutory sexual assault, or other form of sexual exploitation of children.”

2.2.3 “*Sexual abuse*” refers to any interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching.

- 2.2.4 Sexual abuse and harassment can include the following:
- Verbal sexual suggestions, innuendoes, or jokes
 - Leering or ogling
 - Intrusive touching, including pats, hugs, pinches, kissing, brushing against someone's body
 - The use of pornography
 - Sexual assault or attempted sexual assault

2.3 Section III - Child Protection Policy Definitions

- 2.3.1 An employee is hired by the church and provided wages, benefits, and/or other compensation while a volunteer is anyone who provides services for the church and receives no compensation.
- 2.3.2 An Approved Adult is anyone 18 years of age or older who has satisfied all the requirements of the Child Protection Policy and the application procedure in Section 7 of this Policy. An Approved Adult can be an employee of the church or a volunteer. Approved Adults include the Pastor, all employees, and volunteers wanting to work in a leadership or primary role with children, for example:
- Sunday school teachers
 - Vacation Bible school teachers
 - Pre-school teachers and administrators
 - Youth program leaders
 - Mentors
 - Children's choir and music directors
 - Any adult participating in an overnight activity
 - Other adults who have satisfied all the requirements of Approved Adults, e.g. nursery/cribbery volunteers
- 2.3.3 An Assistant Adult Volunteer is anyone at least 18 years of age that satisfies the requirements of the Child Protection Policy and the application procedure in Section 8 of this Policy. These individuals may assist in children's activities for the church with the understanding that they will always be monitored by Approved Adults and never left alone with children who are not their own.
- 2.3.4 A child (or youth) is any person considered a minor under the laws of Maryland, that is, a person who is under 18 years of age. A person who is legally incompetent is considered to be a child under this Policy irrespective of his/her age.
- 2.3.5 A Teen Helper is any child, at least 14 years of age, paid or volunteer, who will assist in caring for children during programs or activities with the approval of a parent or guardian. These individuals may assist in children's activities for the church with the understanding that they will be monitored by Approved Adults and never left alone with one child. Specific requirements are listed in Section 9 of this Policy.
- 2.3.6 A pastor refers to the regularly called or appointed, ordained, rostered leader to the church. In the absence of a called pastor, the Church Council shall appoint another called/hired staff person as the main point of contact until a called, or appointed, pastor assumes duties in the church. The pastor may also appoint such a staff person to serve in their place as preferred.
- 2.3.7 Social media is forms of electronic communication (such as Web sites for social networking and micro blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).

2.3.8 “Successfully passed” means, when used in connection with:

2.3.8.1 A criminal background check, that an individual has not received a conviction, a probation before judgment disposition, a not criminally responsible disposition, or a pending charge for the commission or attempted commission of a crime or has been assessed as being suitable to be an Approved Adult.

2.3.8.2 A review of available church or public records of abuse and neglect of children or adults, that an individual has been assessed as being suitable to be an Approved Adult.

3 Appropriate Behavioral Guidelines

To ensure that a nurturing Christian environment for children is maintained within the church, to protect children who participate in activities sponsored by the church from abuse as defined in section 2.1, and to protect the church’s members from false allegations of abuse, the church has adopted this policy.

3.1 Prohibited Behavior

Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the church’s children shall not violate that responsibility by abusing or causing non-accidental physical or mental injury.

3.2 Expressions of Affection

True expressions of affection toward children can be a manifestation of Christ’s love for all of us. A kind word of encouragement to a child or a pat on the back can be a small but significant act for both the adult and the child. That being said, adults must use caution and common sense when physically expressing affection toward children.

- Respect a child’s refusal of affection.
- Never make a child feel uncomfortable.
- Be aware of appropriate hand placement. A child or observer could misinterpret a pat on the bottom or a bear hug.
- Note that a body-to-body embrace, a touch on private areas (those areas covered by a bathing suit), or any type of kiss is inappropriate.

3.3 Social Media – Best Practices for Online Presence:

We live on a digital age, and many of the young people and their parents with whom we work have a presence in online communities (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.). It is equally important to remember that the pages and materials that we post to these sites are viewed by our young people and need to be consistent with the ministry we do with them. Our pages should not have inappropriate postings or photos on them. Refer to the LCGS Social Media Policy for the guidelines on social media.

Relationships with young people, whether hosted with Social Media or not, are precious and therefore should be handled appropriately.

4 Creating a Safe Church Environment

In addition to creating a church where Approved Adults are trained to keep children safe from abuse, the church should be a place which is safe and hospitable for children of all ages throughout the facility. Among the many areas to consider, the following are steps we will take to maintain a safe and healthy church environment:

- Toys and books for younger children, whether in nursery or Sunday school classrooms or in activity bags for use during worship, should be safe, clean, and age appropriate.
- Cleaning supplies and other harmful chemicals should be kept out of the reach of children under the age of 14.

- Playgrounds should be fenced-in.
- As appropriate, electrical outlets should be properly child-proofed.
- Care should be taken when making decisions about furniture and accessories throughout the building.

5 General Policies

5.1 Two Approved Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two Approved Adults will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some activities may only have one Approved Adult in attendance; in these instances, doors to the room should remain open, unless there are windows that provide an unobstructed view of the activity area. **There should be no fewer than two children with one Approved Adult** (see 5.7 below).

5.2 Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or an interior window that provides an unobstructed view of the activity area. Doors will never be locked while persons are inside the room, unless there is an emergency reason to do so (see 6.6 Active Shooter Response).

5.3 Empty Room Policy

After an activity has ended, check rooms to ensure that no one is in the room.

5.4 Restroom Guidelines

5.4.1 Children up to **5** years of age should be escorted as a group to the restroom. An unrelated adult should never take a child to the restroom alone. The Approved Adult should check the restroom first to make sure that it is empty, prop the door open, and then allow the children inside. If a child requires assistance, leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

5.4.2 For children **from 6 to 12 years old**, an Approved Adult may decide, based on the current environment and activities, to escort the children or send them in same gender groups of two or more to the restroom or, at their discretion, send an individual child. If escorting a group, the Approved Adult should remain outside the restroom door and afterward escort the children back to the room.

5.4.3 Children from 13 to 17 years old may be allowed to go alone to the restroom.

5.5 Discipline Policy

While supervising children in the absence of their parents, it can be expected that one or more youth may require some discipline. It is the policy of this church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. Spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children is not acceptable nor is forcing a child to eat or drink, or withholding food or beverages. If child discipline is necessary, that discipline shall be appropriate to the age, maturity, and physical condition of the child.

5.6 Permission Slips

5.6.1 Children must have written permission from a parent or guardian to participate in any overnight activity or any activity that takes place away from church grounds. The written permission slip must identify the specific overnight or offsite activity in which the child will be participating, the date (or dates for recurring events), time period, location, and method of transportation if appropriate. It will require the parent to provide an emergency contact number, print their name and sign it. The church has approved Permission Slips that should be used; a sample is provided in the Appendices. When sent home with children the Permission Slip will list the activity leader.

5.6.2 The Pastor or Council President may waive the requirement for permission slips where a permission slip serves no useful purpose, for example, when a child is accompanied by a parent or guardian to the activity.

5.7 **Transportation of Children**

When children are transported for church activities by unrelated adults, they shall be transported in groups of at least two (2) children per one Approved Adult in each vehicle (see 5.1 above).

5.8 **COVID-19 Response**

5.8.1 **Sunday School and Other Youth Activities**

The SARS-CoV-2 virus is highly contagious and requires specific protocols to limit the spread and protect the children and teachers in Sunday school and other youth activities, as well as in the preschool. If a Sunday school or other youth activity child or teacher/leader tests positive for COVID-19, please follow the protocol below:

1. Symptom start day is day 0 (if no symptoms, then date of positive test is day 0).
2. Remain home for 5 more days
3. On the 6th day, the student or teacher may return, but must wear a mask for an additional 5 days

The metrics for COVID-19 will be monitored and adjustments made to the policy as recommended by the CDC. It is up to the discretion of the teacher(s) to request for underlying health concerns that all children wear a mask. Those who feel more comfortable wearing a mask are welcome to do so. Please stay home if you are sick or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

5.8.2 **Preschool**

Using recommendations from the Maryland Office of Child Care, the preschool allows children to attend if they have nothing more than a non-persistent runny nose or slight congestion. If they have two (2) or more symptoms or any one of the following -- fever of 100.4 or higher, sore throat, cough, difficulty breathing, diarrhea or vomiting, new onset of severe headache (especially with fever), or loss of taste or smell -- they must get a PCR test that is negative and wait for symptoms to abate before returning to school.

A child who has Covid must quarantine for (five) 5 days at home and then may return to preschool on day six (6), as long as symptoms have abated, but must wear a well-fitting mask for the next five (5) days. A child who is not vaccinated and is exposed to someone with COVID-19 must quarantine for five (5) days at home and get tested on the 5th day or later. If the PCR test is negative, they can return to preschool but must wear a mask for five (5) days. A child who is vaccinated and exposed to COVID-19 does not need to quarantine.

5.9 **Sick Child and Medication Policy**

5.9.1 **Illness in Sunday School and Other Youth Activities (See also 5.8 COVID-19 Response above)**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at our church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be brought to or dropped off at any church activity:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Persistent runny nose, cough or sneezing
- Green or yellow nasal discharge

- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our teachers and leaders to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up and taken home for the remainder of the day or event.

5.9.2 **Illness in Preschool (See also 5.8 COVID-19 Response above)**

Using recommendations from the Maryland Office of Child Care, the preschool's current practice is to allow children to attend if they have nothing more than a non-persistent runny nose or slight congestion. If they have two (2) or more symptoms or any one of the following – fever of 100.4 or higher, sore throat, cough, difficulty breathing, diarrhea or vomiting, new onset of severe headache (especially with fever), or loss of taste or smell – they must get a PCR test that is negative and wait for symptoms to abate before returning to school (see Preschool COVID-19 Response above).

5.9.3 **Medications in Sunday School and Other Youth Activities**

We ask about allergy or medical conditions that we need to be aware of and any accommodations that may be needed when registering children for Sunday school, Vacation Bible School (VBS), and youth activities. We then address these on a case by case basis. If a student needs to have an epinephrine autoinjector (EpiPen), asthma inhaler, or Benadryl, for example, the parent/guardian is required to sign a permission form for emergency administration by the teacher. The teacher will hold the medication and will be trained in its use. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure the device is available. A log will be kept for device(s) sign-in/out. If the child is administered an emergency dose, the parent/guardian will be immediately be notified. The medication is returned to the parent after class/activity. Otherwise, it is the policy of this church not to administer prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent. Parents are reminded of our COVID-19 Response and Sick Child and Medication Policies. Children requiring medication while attending activities away from the church for camps or other events will be covered under special medication permission agreements as determined by the activity.

5.9.4 **Medications in Preschool**

Some preschool students have EpiPens, asthma inhalers or Benadryl in case of an allergic reaction or asthma attack. Three preschool staff members are trained in medication administration, and are the only persons who can administer these medications to students, so someone with this training must be present at any time school is in session. The medications in preschool emergency bags out of the reach of the children. The emergency bags go everywhere the students go (playground, gym, field trips). Sometimes a parent prefers to transport an EpiPen back and forth each time the child has school because the medication is expensive and the parent doesn't want to buy one just for preschool. That is acceptable; however, the parent is responsible for requesting it back should the teacher forget to give it to them at the end of the day when it is busy at dismissal.

5.10 **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- 5.10.1 For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, Approved Adults, or any adult if an Approved Adult is not available, will provide First Aid (wash with soap and water, apply Band-Aids, etc.) as

appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up.

5.10.2 For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent or guardian will immediately be summoned, in addition to another adult, if available. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called and the child's parent/guardian contacted regarding the required emergency care and where the child is being treated. If the injury occurs during preschool or Vacation Bible School, the second adult should be the Director or senior staff member.

5.10.3 Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed by the adult witnessing or attending to the injury. One copy of this report will be given to the child's parent and another will be kept on file in the church office.

5.11 Confidentiality

Church leadership will respect the confidentiality of information which they have acquired in the course of abuse accusations and investigations. Therefore, the Pastor, Council President, and other employees or volunteers in the church with access to this information will:

- Discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations at the beginning of volunteer opportunities, with assurance that confidentiality will be respected.
- Disclose confidential information only for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
- Exercise great care to limit the content of shared information when disclosure is necessary.
- Safeguard the confidentiality of information maintained in notes and files or by electronic means.

6 Specific Policies and Procedures

6.1 Music Programs

Music programs include but are not limited to activities such as children's choirs, music lessons, instrumental practice, and youth bands. Many of these activities are led by a music director employed by the church, but can be run by another Approved Adult. The policies and rules in section 5 apply to these activities with the following exceptions and additions.

6.1.1 Many of these activities will only have one Approved Adult present. For these activities, paragraph 5.1 applies.

6.1.2 For activities held at times when church is not in session and the office is closed, the following rules will be followed:

- A sign in sheet will be completed that includes the child's name, one parent's name, and that parent's contact phone number.
- No activity will be conducted with only one student, unless the parent remains in the building and is able to view the activity.

6.1.3 For Preschool and Sunday school music activities involving the music director or a volunteer, the teachers remain responsible for their students.

6.2 Preschool and Vacation Bible School (VBS)

The policies and rules in Section 5 apply to these activities with the following exceptions and additions.

6.2.1 The preschool and VBS staff, including the director, teachers, adult aides, and substitutes, will be Approved Adults. For the Preschool and VBS, Approved Adults do not have to be members of the church.

6.2.2 Teen helpers will be monitored by the staff.

- 6.2.3 Those who volunteer to assist in the preschool will, as a minimum, meet the criteria and rules for Assistant Adult Volunteers, Section 8, and have name tags that identify that they are in this category.
- 6.2.4 For field trips, parents will be responsible for the transportation of their children and will remain with their children at all times during the trip. If a parent cannot accompany a child and arranges for someone else to bring the child, then a permission slip must be completed and given to the staff that indicates who will have responsibility for the child and an emergency contact number for the parent. As this alternate chaperone is the parent's representative, the chaperone does not have to be an Approved Adult.

6.3 **Worship Nursery/Cribbery and Other Child Care**

The Cribbery, also known as the Nursery, is rarely offered during services and the education time between services. Occasionally, other child care may be offered in other locations at church during special meetings or activities, to provide activities for the children while their parents/guardians are participating in meetings or events. The policies and rules in section 5 apply to these activities with the following exceptions and additions.

- 6.3.1 The Cribbery or other child care when operated is staffed by at least one Approved Adult, who may be helped by one or more Teen Helpers meeting the criteria described in Section 9. Teen Helpers will be supervised by the Approved Adult and should not be left alone with one child.
- 6.3.2 Children from 6 months to 5 years of age may be signed in to the Cribbery when it is operated. The sign in sheet will include the child's name and age, the parent's name and the name of another person allowed to sign out the child (as appropriate), the color/description of any bag being left with the child, and information regarding any food or other type of allergy. It will also have a place for the parent to indicate if the child is in a diaper and whether the adult and teen helpers are authorized to change the diaper. The Sign-in Sheet will include the following statement:

“By signing in your child, you acknowledge and understand that your child will be supervised by one or more Approved Adults who will follow the church's Child Protection Policy, available for review upon request. The Approved Adult may be assisted by one or more Teen Helpers who will also follow this policy.

The parent will be given a pager and if it vibrates, the parent is expected to return immediately to the Cribbery.”
- 6.3.3 At sign-in, the parent will be given a pager that will be used to call the parent to the Cribbery as needed, e.g. for a restroom break, injury, or anxiety.
- 6.3.4 Children in diapers will be changed by the Cribbery adult or teen helpers as needed and if the parent has authorized it.
- 6.3.5 Children in other child care activities for special meetings or events will also be signed in as in 6.3.2. After the service, meeting or event, parents will pick up their child(ren) as quickly as possible. Children will only be signed out to the person who signed the child in or the alternate person identified on the sign-in sheet.

6.4 **German-American Youth Exchange (GAX)**

The GAX program is a unique opportunity for high school-age youth of our church to learn about their Lutheran heritage through inter-congregational fellowship and immersion in German culture. This ministry is also about opening our homes and hearts to our German brothers and sisters in Christ and proudly sharing our U.S. heritage. This program has special rules specified below:

- 6.4.1 An approved GAX permission slip will be completed, signed by a parent, and turned in the event organizer (an Approved Adult).
- 6.4.2 Children are required to sign a Behavior Contract to ensure they understand what behavior is expected of them during the activity.
- 6.4.3 A minimum of two Chaperones, **both Approved Adults**, are required to conduct an activity. Additional Approved Adults should be considered for participation greater than 5 children per chaperone.

6.5 **Youth Education & Social/Service Programs**

This paragraph applies to any children’s activity that is not covered in another section of this policy. Examples of these programs include Sunday school, confirmation classes, and youth groups. The policies and rules in section 5 apply to these activities with the following exceptions and additions.

6.5.1 **For activities held on church property at times other than Sunday morning and the office is closed**, the following rules will be followed:

- 6.5.1.1 A sign-in sheet will be completed that includes the child’s name, one parent’s name, and that parent’s contact phone number. If someone other than that parent is allowed to pick up the child, then the alternate’s name must be added to the sign-in sheet.
- 6.5.1.2 No activity will be conducted with only one student, unless the parent remains in the building and is able to view the activity.
- 6.5.1.3 Two Approved Adults or an Approved Adult and Assistant Adult Volunteer are required to conduct the activity.

6.5.2 **For off-site activities that are not overnight events**, the following rules apply:

- 6.5.2.1 An approved permission slip, described in 5.6, will be completed, signed by a parent, and turned in to the event organizer (an Approved Adult).
- 6.5.2.2 A minimum of two Chaperones, either two Approved Adults or an Approved Adult and Assistant Adult Volunteer are required to conduct an activity. Additional chaperones, of the same categories above, should be included for participation greater than 5 children per chaperone.
- 6.5.2.3 No Chaperone should be left alone with a single child.

6.5.3 **Overnight Activities.** Overnight activities can be on or off the church property, e.g. lock-ins, retreats, and conventions. The following additional rules apply:

- 6.5.3.1 An approved permission slip will be completed, signed by a parent, and turned in the event organizer (an Approved Adult).
- 6.5.3.2 Children are required to sign a Behavior Contract/Covenant to ensure they understand what behavior is expected of them during the activity.
- 6.5.3.3 A minimum of two Chaperones, **both Approved Adults**, are required to conduct an activity. Additional Approved Adults should be included for off-site participation greater than 5 children per chaperone.
- 6.5.3.4 The gender of the Chaperones should match the gender of the children. For off-site events, Chaperones will room with children of the same gender.

- 6.5.3.5 No Chaperone should be left alone with a single child.
- 6.5.3.6 No Chaperone will share a bed with a child that is not their own child.
- 6.5.3.7 Chaperones are expected to enter rooms at various times when there are only children in the room. If a Chaperone must enter a room containing children of another gender, the room door must be propped open, all children must be clothed, and there must be more than one child. The Chaperone should stay long enough to manage the situation at hand, and then leave.
- 6.5.3.8 Children shall not be allowed to enter the rooms of children of another gender without a Chaperone of the same gender as the children in the room being present, i.e., a girl's room will have a woman Chaperone present.

6.6 Active Shooter Response. This section outlines the possible responses in the event of an Active Shooter at the Church. (adapted from FBI Active Shooter Guide for Businesses, March 2018)

There are three basic response options: Run. Hide. Fight. Adult leaders can run away from the shooter, seek a secure place where they can hide and/or deny the shooter access, or incapacitate the shooter in order to survive and protect others from harm. As the situation develops, it is possible an individual may need to use more than one option. During an active shooter situation, individuals will rarely have all of the information they need to make a fully informed decision about which option is best. While they should follow preplanning efforts and any instructions given during an incident, they will often have to rely on their own judgment when deciding which option will best protect lives.

- 6.6.1 **Run.** Undertake, if safe to do so, the first course of action: Run out of the building and far away until in a safe location. Adults should be trained to:
 - Leave personal belongings behind.
 - Visualize possible escape routes, including physically accessible routes for individuals with disabilities.
 - Avoid escalators and elevators.
 - Take other adults and children with them. Decide immediately if flee or hide is in the best interests of themselves and the children, and act accordingly.
 - Call 911 when safe to do so.
 - Let someone know they are safe.
- 6.6.2 **Hide.** If running is not a safe option, hide in as safe a place as possible. Unfortunately, the classrooms have windows which allow observation from the hall, which makes hiding difficult. Adult leaders should be trained to:
 - Hide in a location where the walls might be thicker and have fewer windows.
 - Lock the door.
 - Barricade the doors with door props or with heavy furniture.
 - Close and lock windows and close blinds or cover windows.
 - Turn off lights.
 - Silence all electronic devices.
 - Remain silent and urge the children to be as silent as possible.
 - Use strategies, if possible, to silently communicate with first responders (for example, in rooms with exterior windows, make signs to silently signal law enforcement and emergency responders to indicate the status of the room's occupants).
 - Hide along the wall closest to the exit but out of the view from the hallway (allowing for an ambush of the shooter and for possible escape if the shooter enters the room).
 - Remain in place until given an all clear by identifiable law enforcement.

- 6.6.3 **Fight.** If neither running nor hiding is a safe option, as a last resort, when confronted by the shooter, individuals in immediate danger may consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force. Items in the environment, such as fire extinguishers and chairs, can aid these actions.

7 Approved Adults (Employees and Volunteers)

Applications and related papers will be locked in a confidential file under the jurisdiction of the Pastor. In addition to performing their expected duties, Approved Adults will be expected to monitor Assistant Adult Volunteers and Youth Volunteers to ensure they follow the CPP.

7.1 Employees

This church expects all employees and volunteers to comply with the following requirements and this policy, in addition to the church employment process. Failure to comply with the process or above criteria is grounds for removal from the candidate pool, or if employed then grounds for dismissal.

- 7.1.1 Successfully pass a Maryland Individual Background Check using fingerprints and the Maryland Sex Offender Registry, <http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/onlineservs/socem/default.shtml>, or other criminal background check as deemed appropriate by the church officials. New background checks are required for all applicants and they are required to sign an authorization for church officials to obtain these checks. Previous checks from other sources are not valid for this process.
- 7.1.2 Criminal record checks and sex offender history clearances will be refiled at least every two years or more often if there is reason to believe that an employee's status may have changed. Employees will certify that personal information has not changed and the record checks will be conducted without requiring employees to be fingerprinted again.
- 7.1.3 Attend a Council-approved training session on Child Protection.
- 7.1.4 Sign a Child Protection Covenant acknowledging that the applicant has read and understood the Child Protection Policy and agrees to comply with it.

7.2 Approved Adult Volunteers

This church requires that adults who want to work in a leadership or primary role with children complete the following application process in order to become an Approved Adult Volunteer, defined in paragraph 2.3.2.

- 7.2.1 Complete the Approved Adult & Assistant Volunteer application form, provide signed record check, child abuse history, and Child Protection Covenant forms and turn them in to the Pastor, Church Office or CPPC chairperson. These documents may be placed in a sealed envelope.
- 7.2.2 Successfully pass a Maryland Individual Background Check and the Maryland Sex Offender Registry, <http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/onlineservs/socem/default.shtml>, or other criminal background check as deemed appropriate by the church officials. New background checks are required for all applicants and they are required to sign an authorization for church officials to obtain these checks. Previous checks from other sources are not valid for this process.
- 7.2.3 Criminal record checks and sex offender history clearances will be refiled at least every two years or more often if there is reason to believe that an individual's status may have changed. Individuals will certify that personal information has not changed and the record checks will be run without new fingerprints.

- 7.2.4 Individuals shall be members of the church, or receive a recommendation from the Pastor or their designated representatives, and continue to be an active member after being accepted as an Approved Adult Volunteer. For the purposes of this policy, the Preschool and VBS Directors are considered designated representatives of the Pastor and each may authorize nonmembers to be Approved Adults for their activities.
- 7.2.5 Attend a Council-approved training session on Child Protection.
- 7.2.6 Sign a Child Protection Covenant acknowledging that the applicant has read and understood the Child Protection Policy and agrees to comply with it.

8 Assistant Adult Volunteers

This church requires that adults who want to work in a supporting role with children at this church complete the following application process in order to become an Assistant Adult Volunteer (Assistant), defined in paragraph 2.3.3. These individuals may participate in children's activities for the church with the understanding that they will always be monitored by Approved Adults and never left alone with any children not their own.

- 8.1.1 Complete the Approved Adult & Assistant Volunteer application form and Child Protection Covenant forms and turn them in to the Pastor, Church Office or CPPC chairperson. These documents may be placed in a sealed envelope.
- 8.1.2 Maintain an active membership in the church or receive a recommendation from the Pastor or their designated representatives. For the purposes of this policy, the Preschool and VBS Directors are considered designated representatives of the Pastor and each may authorize nonmembers to be Assistants for their activities.
- 8.1.3 Sign a Child Protection Covenant acknowledging that the applicant has read and understood the Child Protection Policy and agrees to comply with it.
- 8.1.4 When participating in any children's activity, Assistants will check in with the leader/teacher.

9 Teen Helpers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for youth, paid or volunteer, to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such helpers:

- Teen helpers must be at least 14 years of age and have the written permission of a parent or guardian.
- Teen helpers will be trained in accordance with this policy. They will sign a Child Protection Covenant acknowledging that they have read and understood the Covenant and agree to comply with it.
- Teen helpers must be under the supervision of an adult and should not be left alone with one child participating in the activity.

10 Parent Responsibilities

- Parents will provide the activity leader or teacher with their emergency contact number for each child, if the parent plans to leave the church property or will not be attending the activity.
- Parents are responsible to pick up their children within a reasonable time after the activity.
- Parents are responsible for notifying the activity leader or teacher of any pertinent health issues that their child may have. Parents will obey the COVID-19 Response and Sick Child and Medication rules in 5.8 and 5.9 above.

11 Suspected Child Abuse

11.1 Reporting Procedure

Suspected child abuse or neglect should be reported to Harford County Child Protective Services or, after hours, the Harford County Sheriff's Department. If a teacher suspects a child in their care has been subjected to abuse or neglect, they must report it to Harford County Child Protective Services or, after hours, the Harford County Sheriff's Department. If you are a health practitioner, educator, human service worker or a police officer, you are required to report both orally and in writing any suspected child abuse or neglect. The Pastor, Council President, and Child Protection Policy Committee Chairperson will also be notified. The Christian Education and Finance, Legal and Operations Mission Group Leaders should also be made aware. Oral reports should be made immediately and written reports must be made within 48 hours of contact which disclose the suspected abuse or neglect. A report must include:

- The name and home address of the child and the parent or other individual responsible for the care of the child
- The present location of the child
- The age of the child
- Names and ages of other children in the home (if known)
- The nature and extent of injuries or sexual abuse or neglect of the child
- Any information relayed by the individual making the report of previous possible physical or sexual abuse or neglect
- Information available to the individual reporting that might aid in establishing the cause of the injury or neglect
- The identity of the individual(s) responsible for abuse or neglect (if known)

11.1.1 If reporting abuse or neglect of a child involving mental injury, a description of the substantial impairment of the child's mental or psychological ability to function that was observed and identified and why it is believed to be attributable to an act of maltreatment or omission of proper care and attention must be included.

11.1.2 The contact information for Child Protective Services in Harford County is as follows:

- Tel: (410) 836-4713
- After hours call the Sheriff's Office: (410) 838-6600
- Address: 2 South Bond Street, Bel Air, Maryland 21014

11.1.3 All allegations of child abuse or serious physical neglect will be taken seriously by the Pastor(s), Council, and the CPP Committee. All reporting steps taken will be documented, including a log of phone calls, personal visits, and written reports. Whenever possible there should be at least the Pastor or the Council President involved for verification and authority. If the Pastor and Council President are unavailable to report the abuse, then the person who witnessed the abuse or reasonably suspects child abuse has occurred should report the suspected abuse. Thereafter, the person also should promptly notify the Pastor or Council President. The Pastor and/or the Council President shall notify the Office of the Synodical Bishop immediately about any report of suspected child abuse.

11.2 Response to the Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse

11.2.1 Based on the guidance of Child Protective Services, the Pastor, or Council President if the Pastor is unable, will make notification to appropriate parties, e.g. parents, and maintain a record of actions taken.

11.2.2 The Pastor or Council President will provide a written report of the incident and actions taken to the Council and provide updates as needed.

- 11.2.3 The Pastor or Council President will notify the church's insurance broker and/or carrier when the reporting procedures have been initiated. The phone call or written report will be documented. If the original notice is by phone, a letter memorializing that report will also be sent to the insurance broker and/or carrier.
- 11.2.4 The Pastor or Council President will determine whether the church should engage legal counsel in consultation with the insurance carrier.
- 11.2.5 The Pastor or Council President will authorize the Pastor or one of the Council members to act as the official spokesperson for the church. Only the authorized person or persons can speak for the church to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others.
- 11.2.6 All other steps taken to respond to an allegation of child abuse or neglect will be approved in advance by the Pastor or Council President and will, as far as possible, be documented by them.
- 11.2.7 All communications within the church regarding the report of suspected child abuse shall attempt to protect the dignity and privacy of those persons affected by the report including the alleged child victim and the person suspected of child abuse while at the same time ensuring that persons in responsibility and law enforcement authorities remain fully informed.
- 11.2.8 There are times when allegations of abuse prove to be unsubstantiated and without merit. The Pastor or Council President should work to insure the confidentiality of the allegations and take measures to protect the reputation and standing of the individual in the life of the church and the community.

12 The Child Protection Policy Committee (CPPC)

12.1 CPPC Membership

The CPPC shall consist of four members, plus the Pastor and Council President. The Pastor and Council President will appoint members with the approval of the Council. The CPPC chair shall be elected by the committee or appointed by the Pastor and Council President. Upon initial implementation, two members will be appointed for one-year terms and two members for two-year terms. After the initial terms, two-year terms will be used. If a member resigns or is removed from the committee, a replacement will be appointed following the same procedure discussed above, for the remainder of the exiting member's term.

12.2 Responsibilities of the Child Protection Policy Committee

12.2.1 Periodically review the CPP and recommend changes to the Council.

12.2.2 Keep Council apprised of all committee activities. Submit periodic educational statements regarding committee activities for publication in the church communications.

12.2.3 Application Process

- Receive applications and record check forms from church members desiring to become an Approved Adult. Delegate the task of reviewing applications to the committee chair and the Pastor.
- Forward record check forms to the designated Council representative for processing.
- After the results of record checks are returned, submit qualified candidate files to the Pastor, or their designee, for Personal Interviews. Personal Interview forms will be completed by the interviewer and will be included in the CPP files.
- The Pastor or their designee will grant "Approved" status for individuals who successfully pass all requirements and will notify the individual, the committee, and others as appropriate

of the individual's status. The file will be appropriately annotated and added to the CPP files.

12.2.4 Provide Child Protection training for all staff, approved adults and volunteers working with the children regarding child abuse (physical and sexual) and the church policy. Training should be completed prior to an individual working with children. Until a training program is in place, adults currently working with children may continue to do so and will attend the training at the earliest opportunity after it is available.

12.3 Responsibilities of the Pastor, Church Office, Council, and Ministry/Activity Leads

12.3.1 Post a list of Approved Adults as a reference and provide copies to each ministry team leader.

12.3.2 The Pastor will perform the personal interviews with Approved Adult Volunteer candidates, or designate an alternate to perform this responsibility.

12.3.3 The committee will recommend to Council and Council will determine appropriate disciplinary action or disqualification in response to a violation or violations of the Child Protection Policy.

12.3.4 Ministry and Activity Leaders will monitor Approved Adults to ensure that policies are being followed.

12.3.5 Files

12.3.5.1 Permission slips will be turned in to the office after the conclusion of events and kept for three years. If an incident of abuse is reported relating to an event, the permission slips for that event will be maintained indefinitely.

12.3.5.2 Applications, record checks, interview forms, and signed CP Covenants will be maintained for three years after an Approved Adult, Assistant Adult Volunteer or Teen Helper stops participating or leaves the church. If an incident of abuse is reported against any of these individuals, the applicable documents will be maintained indefinitely.

12.3.5.3 Sign-in sheets will be kept for one year.

13 Violations of Child Protection Policy

- Persons who admit to or plead guilty to or are convicted in a court of law of any form of physical or sexual abuse of a child will be immediately, permanently, and completely disqualified from working with children in the congregation. Persons who admit in writing to any type of physical or sexual abuse of a child but who have not appeared in a court of law will be disqualified from working with children.
- The Council shall disqualify any person from working with children while allegations of sexual or physical abuse are being investigated. The CPPC committee can recommend temporary or permanent disqualification of any person(s) from working with children as the committee deems appropriate. Alleged violations of the policy, other than abuse, shall be immediately reported to the CPPC Committee chair who will report it to the Pastor and the Council President, if deemed appropriate. The alleged violations of the policy will be investigated at the direction of Council. If the person(s) is found to be in violation of the policy the CPPC committee will recommend to Council what action, if any, is appropriate.

14 Forms

All standardized forms and reports discussed in this policy are named here. A brief description of forms not described above is provided here.

14.1 **Permission Slips**

- Off Property Activity
- Overnight Activity
- GAX: For the bi-annual trip abroad, the GAX permission slip will identify that the trip will be overseas and that children will be staying with families from our partner congregation.

14.2 **Cribbery/Nursery Sign-in Sheet**

14.3 **Behavior Contract**

The Behavior Contract identifies the overnight activity and the behavior expected of the children planning to participate in the activity. It is signed by the child and a parent.

14.4 **Approved Adult and Assistant Adult Volunteer Application**

To be completed by all individuals desiring to become an Approved Adult or Assistant Adult Volunteer. Completed forms may be returned in a sealed envelope to the Pastor, Church Office, or CPPC Chair.

14.5 **Child Protection Covenant**

To be signed by all church members desiring to become an Approved Adult, Assistant Adult Volunteer or Teen Helper and returned to the Pastor, Church Office, or CPPC Chair.

14.6 **Request for Background Check**

To be completed by individuals desiring to become an Approved Adult. Completed forms should be returned to the Pastor, Church Office, or CPPC Chair. The Maryland Individual Background Check requires completed fingerprint cards.

14.7 **Personal Interview Form**

To be completed by the Pastor, or designee, during the Personal Interview of the applicant desiring to become an Approved Adult Volunteer. This form is signed by the applicant and the Pastor, or their designee, and placed in the applicant's file following the interview.

14.8 **Incident Report**

Used to report accidents and incidents that cause injury to individuals on church property or during sanctioned church events.