

Trinity Lutheran Church Spring Grove, MN



Safety and Security Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

Approved by council: February 14, 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Cover sheet
2. Table of Contents
3. Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth
4. Mission Statement
 - Commitment
 - Why is a safety and security policy necessary?
 - Parental Responsibility
5. Supervision Procedures
6. Supervision Procedures continued
7. Display of Affection Guidelines
8. Fire Evacuation Plan for TLC
9. Storm Plan for TLC
10. Crisis and Emergency Management Policy
 - Bullying Policy
 - Background Check Policy for TLC
11. Background Check Policy for TLC continued
 - Guidelines for Photography at TLC
 - Social Media Guidelines
12. Social Media Guidelines continued
 - Criminal Records and Sex Offenders Registry Information
13. Questionable Behavior Reporting Form
14. Authorization for Background Check Form

Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth

Relationships among people are the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

Relationships in ministry should, ideally, always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur. This Code of Conduct has been adopted by Trinity Lutheran Church to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All Church Personnel are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code before agreeing to adhere to the statements and continue in service to the church.

Code of Conduct for the protection of Children and Youth

- Church Personnel and members agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- Church Personnel and members agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- In the event that Church Personnel or members observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, church personnel and members agree to immediately report their observations to the pastor and/or a church council member.
- All Church Personnel and members acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies.
- Church Personnel and members understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Safety and Security regarding children, youth, adults, and vulnerable adults

Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

Trinity's Mission Statement:

As people created by God, we live in gratitude for God's many gifts, and rejoice that: God forms us into a community in which we worship, pray, hear God's Word, share in the sacraments, confess our sin, receive forgiveness, and live in the unbounded grace of God; God calls us to be disciples of Jesus Christ, to grow in faith over our lifetime, and to share the good news of Jesus with all people; God equips us through the Holy Spirit to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world.

By the grace of God in Christ, we live in peace and joy, connected to God and to one another, to further God's work on earth.

As a Christian community we spread the Good News, grow in faith, discover and use our gifts to serve God, and to care for all people.

Trinity's Commitment:

The following policies and procedures are to help ensure that Trinity Lutheran Church's ministry is a place where all people can feel they are safe, loved, and valued. The congregation is committed to providing a safe environment for all.

Why is a safety and security policy necessary?

To affirm and protect children, youth, adults, and vulnerable adults.

To affirm and protect volunteers and staff.

To raise awareness.

To be a leader and advocate in our community.

To affirm and protect Trinity Lutheran Church (TLC).

Parental Responsibility:

All parents should be encouraged to assume individual responsibility for their children and not assume the church sponsored activity or presence on the church premises is a guarantee of the child's safety. Children should not be left unattended in the church building.

Supervision Procedures

1. Adults responsible for any church activity involving individual contact with children/youth may be interviewed, must consent to complete background checks, and are required to participate in training/preparation meetings. These steps are crucial to creating a safe and hospitable environment for children to grow in their faith. It is expected that all volunteers who work with children at TLC will participate in safety trainings, as required by the church.
2. Two Deep Leadership: Employees and volunteer workers are encouraged not to be alone with children, but to work in groups – at least pairs. This is true in the church building and also at church sponsored events elsewhere. Doors must be left open if there is only one adult in a room with a minor. Speaking to a minor one-on-one should only be done in a public setting with others present. When meeting youth outside of regular group activities, the adult leader should notify the parent as to where the meeting will take place and the meeting should be in a public location, such as a coffee shop.
3. Drop off/Pick up: Supervision of children/youth should be provided before and after the event until all participants are in the custody of parents or legal guardians or have left the premises. Parents, please make sure your children/youth safely reach their leader. After Sunday school, parents/guardians or other authorized person need to pick up their Preschool through Kindergarten children in the classroom and their 1st through 6th grade children in the Fellowship Hall as quickly as possible after the end of class. After Confirmation events, parents need to arrange for their child to be picked up as quickly as possible after the end of the event. If you find it necessary to send another person to pick up your child from Sunday school, Confirmation, or other youth/education events (other than parent(s) listed on registration form), please send a note along for the leader/teacher or call the leader/teacher ASAP.
4. Parental permission including signed medical release and emergency contacts is needed for some church activities.
5. Parental registration form must be completed before student(s) attend any church events, including, but not limited to: Sunday school, Confirmation classes, or youth trips.
6. Respect of privacy: Adult leaders need to respect the privacy of minors in situations such as use of rest rooms, changing into swimming suits or taking showers on overnight outings and intrude only insofar as health and safety require. They also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations. Children needing to use the restroom should be escorted to the door of the appropriate restroom. The volunteer should wait at the door until the child is finished. If the child needs your help with buttoning or zipping, have them come out into the hall for your help.
7. Off-campus Guidelines: A minimum of two adults should be present at an overnight event. If participants are both male and female, the adults should be both male and female. If these conditions cannot be met, the event should be cancelled. On outings that require that an adult share the same room as a minor, the adult must not occupy the same bed as a minor, with the exception of a parent or guardian. Males and females should sleep in separate rooms/areas at events and have separate access to bathroom facilities. When separate facilities are not

available, times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted for showers. Youth who turn 18 before/during a youth trip are still considered minors for purposes of this policy.

8. Transportation: Transportation to and from events is the responsibility of the families. If youth drive or ride with another youth to or home from a church sponsored event, it is with parental consent only. Transportation during an event can only be provided by a leader who is at least 21 years old. During events, drivers should avoid dropping off or picking up minors without being accompanied by another adult. The staff shall set standards for who is permitted to drive during events. All drivers must possess and show proof of a current driver's license and carry insurance. Any deviations should have prior consent of the parent and be reported to the next person in line of responsibility (verbal consent is acceptable).
9. Touch: Avoid all inappropriate touch. See guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate affection on page 7.
10. No sexual behavior is permitted with minors or between minors. Other behaviors which are abusive but do not involve physical contact are also prohibited. Examples are sexual comments, showing pornographic sexual material and the exposure of sexual parts of any person's body or electronic communications with sexual connotations.
11. Volunteers should be alert for inappropriate behavior or relationships with children or youth. Questionable behaviors should be reported to the proper supervising staff person or pastor using reporting form on page 13.
12. All non-prescription (illegal) alcohol/drugs are prohibited for adults participating in youth events. Youth and child participants will be sent home immediately if found with alcohol or drugs. Supervising adults should be informed of prescription drugs (including name, dosage, and time given) brought to an event by a minor.
13. Firearms: The possession of firearms/weapons/knives is prohibited during events.
14. Equality of Treatment: Adults should not give preferential treatment to certain minors and not to others. All minors are equals and should be treated as such.
15. Dating: No adult leader can show romantic/dating behavior to any of our youth participants.

*** If any questionable behaviors are observed, please utilize reporting form on page 13. ***

Display of Affection Guidelines

Appropriate

- ❖ Ask permission before touching
- ❖ Quick hugs
- ❖ Pats on shoulder or back
- ❖ Handshakes
- ❖ High fives
- ❖ Verbal praise
- ❖ Touching hands, shoulders, and arms
- ❖ Arms around shoulders
- ❖ Hold hands in prayer or when person is upset
- ❖ Sitting close to small children
- ❖ Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- ❖ Holding or picking up children 3 years old and younger

Inappropriate

- ❖ Any form of unwanted affection
- ❖ Restraining hugs
- ❖ Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas
- ❖ Lying down or sleeping beside children
- ❖ Massages
- ❖ Patting children on thigh, knee, or leg
- ❖ Tickling or wrestling
- ❖ Touching or hugging from behind
- ❖ Games involving inappropriate touch
- ❖ Kisses on the mouth
- ❖ Showing affection in isolated rooms of building
- ❖ Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants or toddlers
- ❖ Compliments that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing," or "You look really hot in those jeans."

Fire Evacuation Plan for TLC

In the event of a fire emergency, the following action should be taken:

1. Staff or supervising leaders will immediately dial 911 and report that Trinity Lutheran Church, 203 E Main in Spring Grove has a fire.
2. Staff, ushers, and leadership on site will immediately begin to assist any class, group, or volunteers out of the building through the nearest exit.
3. Sunday school teachers will move students directly out the nearest exit. Emergency escape routes will be posted in each classroom. PARENTS SHOULD NOT TRY TO GET THEIR CHILDREN OUT OF CLASSROOMS DURING A FIRE ALARM. THIS WILL CREATE CONFUSION AND DIFFICULTY IN EVACUATION. Teachers will take attendance lists with them. All fire exit doors are unlocked from the inside at all times.
4. All groups evacuating will come together on the CHURCH LAWN ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING, a safe distance away from the structure and emergency vehicles. PARENTS MUST MEET CHILDREN ON THE LAWN. DO NOT TAKE CHILDREN OFF GROUNDS UNTIL THEY ARE ACCOUNTED FOR. Any available adults will help supervise the children. If there is direct knowledge of people still in the structure, inform the fire department immediately upon their arrival.
5. Cars and vehicles should not leave the area until told. They may cause bottleneck at the intersections and make it difficult for emergency vehicles to get to the site of the fire. Let all emergency vehicles have the right of way.
6. Fire extinguishers are located throughout the building (at the North entrance by the elevator, in the kitchen, at the back of the sanctuary, in the furnace room, and in the hallway by the entrance to the Middle Room). First-aid kits are located in the church office and in the kitchen. Diagrams for escape routes will be posted in each Sunday school classroom.

There are several exits that lead directly to the outside: one on the north side of the building, one on the west side of the building, and two on the south side of the building. During a fire, evacuate directly outside through the nearest exit and proceed to the CHURCH LAWN ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING.

Sunday school rooms will be posted with the nearest exit that should be used. If that exit is blocked by fire, teachers should calmly lead the children to the next closest exit.

Storm Plan for TLC

If the area is under a **storm watch**:

- ❖ Keep a close eye on the sky for bad weather
- ❖ Keep a battery-operated device on hand for weather updates
- ❖ Be prepared to move indoors as soon as you are notified
- ❖ Always have two adults in each room that children are in
- ❖ Keep the children calm by remaining calm yourself

If the area is under a **storm warning or tornado watch**:

- ❖ Keep the children in the basement of the church, including the Fellowship Hall and lower level Sunday school classrooms
- ❖ Keep a battery-operated device on hand for weather updates
- ❖ Be prepared to move to safer areas as soon as you are notified of tornado activity in the area
- ❖ Always have two adults in each room that children are in
- ❖ Keep the children calm by remaining calm yourself

If the area is under a **tornado warning**:

- ❖ Quickly and calmly move children to the basement of the church
- ❖ Keep a battery-operated device on hand for weather updates
- ❖ Keep children calm by remaining calm yourself; you can lead them in singing or sharing happy stories
- ❖ Always have two adults in each room that the children are in

Crisis and Emergency Management Policy

If a violent intruder or crisis situation occurs, call 911 and evacuate at once, if possible. If evacuation would endanger anyone, then please do your best to have the students remain quiet, lights turned off, doors locked, and everyone remaining calm until staff or legal authorities give notification that the area is “all clear”.

Bullying Policy

Bullying is an act of aggression, causing embarrassment, pain, or discomfort to someone. It can take a number of forms: physical, verbal, making gestures, extortion and exclusion, putting words/pictures on social/electronic media, and more. TLC will not tolerate bullying. It is entirely contrary to the values and principles we work and live by. All members of the church community have a right to worship and participate in a secure and caring environment. They also have the responsibility to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment.

Background Check Policy for TLC

TLC may conduct a background check on an individual that serves in any position that puts them in contact with children or youth. Background checks will be conducted every three years through a professional screening service.

TLC will accept paper copies of background checks for volunteers from employers within the current three-year period as long as it meets TLC criteria (i.e. sexual offender registry check, court record check, and driving record if applicable).

The findings of all background checks will be considered confidential and maintained in a locked file cabinet at TLC. The process will be administered as follows:

Paid staff:	Background checks will be conducted by the pastor and/or church president
Pastor(s):	Background checks will be conducted by the church president and/or president-elect
Confirmation mentors:	Background checks will be conducted by the pastor and/or church president
Youth volunteers: (as indicated)	Background checks will be conducted by the pastor and/or church president

The Youth and Family Coordinator will maintain individual spreadsheets for their volunteers and notify the pastor and/or church president if the need arises to obtain background checks per the three-year policy.

Individuals identified as needing a background check must complete the following process:

- ❖ Complete a 'background check authorization' form
- ❖ A background check will be completed on-line through a reputable on-line background check company at no cost to the staff member or volunteer
- ❖ When the completed background check is received back, it shall be reviewed by the pastor and/or council president to ensure no issues are identified. Information will then be securely filed.
- ❖ In the event that an issue is identified, the pastor and church council president will respond as necessary.

Volunteer(s) working with children who are in the presence and assisting a person who has had a cleared background check completed is/are exempt from a background check.

The form for authorization of a background check can be found on page 14 of this handbook.

Guidelines for Photography at TLC

- ❖ Images of adults engaged in congregation activities can be used without seeking permission. We will respect the wishes of anyone who does not want to be photographed.
- ❖ Permissions will be sought to display photos of children from a parent or legal guardian for all children ages 17 or younger, using no names.
- ❖ Credit for who took a particular photo will be given, if desired by the photographer. We honor any copyright wishes or restrictions.
- ❖ Photos will be removed immediately upon request.

Social Media Guidelines

These Social Media Guidelines apply to all communication tools for sharing content and discussing information. Because this is a constantly evolving area, this policy applies to all new social media platforms whether or not they are specifically mentioned in this policy. Members should:

- ❖ Be responsible. Social media are individual interactions, not official congregational communications. Member of the TLC community are personally responsible for their posts.
- ❖ Be selective. Use the right medium for your message – a blog or social network might not be the right place for messages intended for only a small group, and email or other means might be best.
- ❖ Be smart. A blog or community post is visible to the entire world. Remember that what you write will be public, and potentially for a long time.
- ❖ Identify yourself. Use real identities to the greatest extent possible rather than anonymous posts or comments.
- ❖ Take care to safeguard the privacy of others. Do not publish the personal information of others in the community without their written permission, or in the case of minors (17 and under), written permission of their parents or legal guardians. Do not disclose any information that can identify a

particular person, including name, phone number, address, or email address without written consent.

- ❖ Honor differences. TLC is a faith community that encourages free expression and values civil debate. If you disagree with others, do so with care and respect.
- ❖ Obey copyright laws. Users must comply fully with copyright law when posting and uploading copyrighted materials. It is preferable to point to a link so the proper person can take credit for the materials.

Adult staff and volunteers are not encouraged to friend youth on personal social media. If there is a social networking site created for any of the youth programs, it will be accessible by other adult staff and volunteers within the program. The pages should be used primarily to send group messages.

Criminal Records and Sex Offenders Registry Information

Agency	Minnesota Department of Public Safety Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Criminal Justice Information Systems Section 1246 University Avenue St. Paul, Minnesota 55104 (651) 642-0670
Website	www.dps.state.mn.us
Criminal Background Check	Criminal background records are obtained through name and date of birth checks.
Sex Offender Registry	The Sex Offender Registry number is (651) 603-6748 The online Sex Offender Registry is available at www.doc.state.mn.us .

Questionable Behavior Reporting Form

Individual(s) of Concern: _____

Date of Occurrence: _____

Time of Occurrence: _____

Type of Concern:

- ☐ Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth
- ☐ Policy violation with a child or youth
- ☐ Possible risk of abuse
- ☐ Other concern: _____

Describe the situation: What happened, where it happened, when it happened, who was involved, who was present, who was notified? If reported to the State, what was their recommendation about investigating?

Has the situation ever occurred previously?

What action was taken? How was the situation handled, who was involved, who was questioned, were the police called?

What is the follow-up plan? Does anyone else need to be notified? Will the situation need monitoring? Would you like someone to call you to discuss this situation?

Submitted by: _____ Telephone number: _____

Authorization for Background Check

I, _____, hereby authorize Trinity Lutheran Church in Spring Grove, MN, to obtain and/or request information about my criminal history from any entity chosen specifically for conducting this search, to release information regarding any record of charges or convictions contained in its files, or in any criminal file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state, or national file, and including but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by city, county, state and federal law. I do release said entities from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request.

Signature of Applicant

Date

PLEASE PRINT:

First Name

Middle Name

Last Name

Current address

City

State

Zip

Previous address if different from above within the last three years

Other names used by applicant (if any)

Date of Birth

Social Security Number

Driver's License Number

Issuing State

FOR OFFICE USE

Date background check submitted: _____

Date report received: _____