

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**  
**ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (ZELC)**  
85 E. Brandt Blvd.  
Landisville, PA 17538

**PART 1: FAITH COMMITMENT & PURPOSES OF THE POLICY**

- ***Faith Commitment***

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church (ZELC) strives to be an inclusive and welcoming Lutheran church home that educates and emboldens children, youth, and adults of all ages to serve God and spread His word in our local communities; guided by the Holy Spirit, nurtured by the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, firm in our desire for congregational in-reach and community outreach, and strengthened by our fellowship with each other, we strive as a church family to achieve spiritual growth and maturity.

- ***To provide a safe environment and protect all children who attend ZELC from an abuse situation in all areas of his/her life at Zion.***

Parents bring their children to ZELC seeking God's blessings. They have their children baptized. The children participate in various Christian education events and programs throughout their childhood and adolescence. This congregation understands that its ministries support parents in fulfilling the promises they make to God during the rite of baptism. Only the Holy Spirit gives faith. Nonetheless, the church aids children and youth in learning about the Christian faith, in developing a Christian identity, and in learning to love and then serve the Lord Jesus. Safeguarding the children during their time with the congregation is of vital importance to the Lord and His church.

- ***To protect our child/youth workers from being suspected or falsely accused of wrongful behavior toward a child.***

Such accusations can do a great deal of damage even to an innocent youth worker. Our procedures for maintaining a safe environment and admonishing inappropriate behavior are designed to prevent compromising situation in the first place, and also to strengthen a youth worker's defense against false accusations.

- ***To lower our church's legal risk by establishing a policy that meets the test of reasonable care.***

As horrible as these things are to contemplate, despair and resignation are not the only options. We can, and must, become proactive. These are things we can do to mitigate these potential crimes. Saint Paul, when discussing the reality and consequence of sin in the human experience, reached a similar point of sobriety. Instead of despair, he counseled Christians to choose to be optimistic and to exert

themselves in concert with God's steadfast love and mercy. Paul wrote, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

To ensure that a nurturing Christian environment for children and youth is maintained within this congregation, to protect children and youth who participate in activities sponsored by the church from abuse, and to protect the congregation's members and staff from false allegations of abuse, the congregation has adopted the Safe Church Policy and Procedures.

- ***To guard the honor and reputation of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

If a child in our church is harmed through a member's sin, some people will inevitably think less of the church and of our Lord. We are committed to doing everything in our power to prevent such dishonor from happening, and protecting our children from abuse is one way to do so.

Although the issue of child abuse is an unpleasant one, we believe that God can use our response to these concerns for good (see Romans 8:28-29). **Instead of viewing the screening process as a "necessary evil," we see it as an opportunity to promote teamwork (I Cor. 12:12-31), to demonstrate mutual submission (Eph. 5:21), and to get to know one another better.** Through this process we can learn more about your gifts and abilities, which will help us to encourage you in your work with the young people in our church (Heb. 10: 24-25).

## **PART 2: CHILD ABUSE AS DEFINED UNDER PA CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES LAW (CPSL)**

Although this policy focuses primarily on child sexual abuse, all forms of child abuse are prohibited, and are included under this policy.

### **Definitions of Abuse**

Definitions of abuse from the **Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL [Title 23 PA.C.S. Chapter 63], as amended December, 2013, to be effective December 31, 2014,** are as follows:

#### **Intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:**

1. **Physical abuse:** Causing bodily injury through any recent act or failure to act. Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act. Bodily injury is impairment of physical condition or substantial pain.

The following are “per se” acts of child abuse (meaning the act itself, apart from the outcome, is considered child abuse).

- Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
  - Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
  - Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
  - Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
  - Interfering with the breathing of a child.
  - Causing a child to be present at a location while a violation of 18 PA.C.S. §7508.2 (relating to operation a methamphetamine laboratory) is occurring, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
2. Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
  3. **Mental abuse:** Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through an act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act. Serious mental injury is a psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment, that:  
(1) renders a child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear that the child's life or safety is threatened; or  
(2) seriously interferes with a child's ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.
  4. **Neglect:** Causing serious physical neglect of a child. Serious physical neglect is any of the following when committed by a perpetrator that endangers a child's life or health, threatens a child's well-being, causes bodily injury or impairs a child's health, development or functioning:  
(1) A repeated, prolonged or egregious failure to supervise a child in a manner that is appropriate considering the child's developmental age and abilities.  
(2) The failure to provide a child with adequate essentials of life, including food, shelter or medical care.
  5. Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.
  6. **Sexual abuse:** Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act. Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act. Sexual abuse or exploitation is any of the following:

(1) The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another individual to engage in sexually explicit conduct, which includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (i) Looking at the sexual or other intimate parts of a child or another individual for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in any individual.
- (ii) Participating in sexually explicit conversation either in person, by telephone, by computer or by a computer-aided device for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.
- (iii) Actual or simulated sexual activity or nudity for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.
- (iv) Actual or simulated sexual activity for the purpose of producing visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming.

*This paragraph does not include consensual activities between a child who is 14 years of age or older and another person who is 14 years of age or older and whose age is within four years of the child's age.*

**The following are per se acts of child abuse:**

(2) Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the actor knows or reasonably should have known:

- (i) Is required to register as a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender under 42 PA.C.S. Ch. 97 Subch. H (relating to registration of sexual offenders), where the victim of the sexual offense was under 18 years of age when the crime was committed.
- (ii) Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 PA.C.S. §9799.24 (relating to assessments) or any of its predecessors.
- (iii) Has been determined to be a sexually violent delinquent child as defined in 42 PA.C.S. §9799.12 (relating to definitions)

(3) Any of the following offenses committed against a child (Criminal code)

- (i) Rape, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3121 (relating to rape).
- (ii) Statutory sexual assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault).
- (iii) Involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse).

- (iv) Sexual assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault).
- (v) Institutional sexual assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3124.2 (relating to institutional sexual assault).
- (vi) Aggravated indecent assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault).
- (vii) Indecent assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3126 (relating to indecent assault).
- (viii) Indecent exposure, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 3127 (relating to indecent exposure).
- (ix) Incest, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 4302 (relating to incest).
- (x) Prostitution, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 5902 (relating to prostitution and related offenses).
- (xi) Sexual abuse, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children).
- (xii) Unlawful contact with a minor, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 6318 (relating to unlawful contact with minor).
- (xiii) Sexual exploitation, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. § 6320 (relating to sexual exploitation of children).

Any recent act or failure to act is defined as occurring within the last two years.

### **PART 3: TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY**

***Child or Youth:*** Any person considered a minor under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, that is, a person who is under 18 years of age.

***Direct contact with children:*** The care, supervision, guidance or control of children or routine interaction with children.

***Mandated Reporter:*** Effective 12/31/14, the PA CPSL imposes a reporting mandate, or requirement, on any adult who comes into contact with children in the course of his or her work or professional practice, specifically including “clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization,” or “an individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, is a person responsible for the child’s welfare or has direct contact with children.” (as defined **CPSL Title 23 PA.C.S. Chapter 63**).  
**This includes volunteers, as well as staff.**

**Routine interaction:** Regular and repeated contact that is integral to a person's employment or volunteer responsibilities.

**Pastor(s):** An ordained minister under call to the congregation.

**Children, Youth, and Family Ministry Director (CYFM):** A lay employee under hire by the congregation.

**Child Protection Committee (CPC):** The committee that implements and enforces the Child Protection Policy.

**Approved Adult:** Anyone over 18 years of age who has satisfied the requirements of the Child Protection Policy. An Approved Adult can be an employee or a non-employee of the congregation, and is considered a mandated reporter if the person is 18 or older. Mandated reporters are required to report directly to authorities when abuse is suspected. Approved Adults are required to have state-specified screening/certifications. (See Section 2 of this policy for certifications, and Section 4 for mandated reporting procedures.) Approved Adults include, but are not limited to:

- a. All employed staff
- b. Sunday School teachers/helpers
- c. Children's Church leaders
- d. Vacation Bible School teachers, volunteers and helpers
- e. Youth Group Leaders, assistants and chaperones
- f. Children's choir director and assistants
- g. Kids' Club volunteers
- h. Nursery volunteers
- i. Anyone else who works directly with children/youth including scout leaders and assistants
- j. Child Protection Committee members

**Person in Charge or Designee:** Effective 12/31/14, the "Person in Charge of the Institution or their designee" is responsible for facilitating cooperation with authorities on a suspected child abuse investigation; and is also responsible for receiving notification from the mandated reporter that a suspected abuse report has been filed. For these specific purposes, the **Person in Charge at our church is the pastor.**

#### **PART 4: THE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE (CPC)**

The CPC shall consist of the Pastor, Congregation Council designee, CYFM Director, and one member appointed at large. All members of the committee will be approved by the Congregation Council.

*The Committee will:*

1. Implement and enforce this Child Protection Policy.
2. Review and make recommendations to the Congregation Council for revising congregation policy regarding the safety of our children/youth.
3. Provide/arrange for training for all staff and approved adults working with the children/youth regarding child abuse and the Child Protection Policy.
4. Maintain a list of Approved Adults and disseminate within the church community.
5. Monitor Approved Adults to ensure that policies are being followed.
6. Keep Congregation Council apprised of all activities of the committee.
7. Be kept apprised of investigations.

*The Pastor will:*

1. Review all applications.
2. Collect and forward requests for certifications, with cover letters, to PA State Police and PA Department of Public Welfare; as well as FBI Fingerprint certifications for staff, and volunteers who haven't been residents of Pennsylvania for ten years.
3. Determine whether subject is eligible for employment or as volunteer based on result of certifications and other factors. Certain convictions or founded CPS reports will result in automatic denial of placement in work with children. (See Appendix forms Approved Adult - Review of Application and Certifications and Approved Adult - Review of Disqualifications for Application.)
4. Maintain all certifications.
5. Receive and process reports of suspected abuse.
6. Make available, upon request of an individual, his/her certification reports.

*The CPC Chair will be appointed by the Pastor and will:*

1. Ensure that required forms are received for all applicants and proper records are maintained.
2. Call meetings as often as needed, but no less than once each year.



## **PART 5: SELECTION OF APPROVED ADULTS**

To protect the children/youth in our care, the following guidelines are established for those who desire to work with children/youth less than 18 years of age.

Approved Adults must:

1. Attend ZELC for a minimum of 6 months.
2. Complete an Approved Adult application form and the required certification forms. Certifications are required for all applicants. It is encouraged that the applicant pays the filing fees, if applicable, for certifications. If there is a hardship, and you are unable to pay these fees, please discuss with the Chair of the Child Protection Committee for assistance. Cash or checks made payable to "Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church" are acceptable forms of payment.
3. Attend a standard initial training session.
4. Sign and comply with the Child Protection Covenant.
5. Once accepted as an Approved Adult, notify the pastor or Chair of the Child Protection Committee if arrested or convicted of an offense that would constitute grounds for denial of employment or volunteer work with children, or named as a perpetrator in an founded or indicated report of abuse (See Appendix Form **Review of Legal Disqualifications**). Such notification is required within 72 hours under PA law effective 12/31/14.

### **Required Application Forms to Become an Approved Adult** (The required forms are located in the Appendix)

#### **Forms listed below are used to apply to become an approved adult:**

1. Approved Adult Application
2. Consent/Release for return of Child Abuse Certification to Church
3. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Records Check Form
4. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Certification Form
5. FBI Fingerprint Record Check required for employees; and required for volunteers who have  
not lived in PA for the past 10 years and who don't have a prior FBI check
6. Swear or affirm statement for volunteer or employee

#### **Forms listed below are used after certification results are received:**

1. Approved Adult - Review of Application and Certifications
2. Approved Adult – Review of Disqualifications for Application PA
3. Letter of Acceptance as an Approved Adult
4. Child Protection Covenant



## Required Certifications

All adult church workers “applying for or holding a paid or unpaid position with a child-care service, a school or a program, activity or service as a person responsible for the child’s welfare or having direct contact with children,” will be required by the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) to obtain certifications (previously called background checks or clearances). The staff member supervising each volunteer or employee is legally required to obtain these clearances, and is subject to prosecution for deliberately failing to do so. In compliance with this law, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church requires employees and volunteers working with children and youth to obtain the following certifications before working with children/youth:

1. Child Abuse History Certification Form (CY-113) (\$8 for employees, no fee for volunteers)
2. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check Form (SP4-164) (\$8 for employees, no fee for volunteers)
3. Applicant must swear or affirm in writing (Approved Adult Application) he/she is not disqualified from employment or service related to working with children {pursuant to §6344(C)},\* or “has not been convicted of an offense similar in nature to those crimes listed in subsection (C) under the laws or former laws” of any other jurisdiction. *Note: All volunteers and most employees working with children are required to sign a “swear or affirm” statement like this, so we choose to require it of all volunteers and employees working with children or youth.*
4. FBI Fingerprint Record Checks (\$27-\$29 – approximate):
  - Employees must obtain the fingerprint record regardless of duration of residence in PA.
  - Volunteers who have not lived in PA for 10 years are also required to get the FBI fingerprint records check if they haven’t previously done so for other volunteer service or employment.

Currently, FBI Fingerprint Record Check information may be obtained via COGENT; see [https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index\\_dpw.htm](https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_dpw.htm) to locate a fingerprint processing center near our church. Note: Effective 12/31/14, PA State Police have responsibility to either process fingerprints directly, or designate an agent.

Effective 12/31/14, all employee certifications, including FBI fingerprint checks, must be obtained every 60 months, with a one year period, or until 12/31/15, to bring all employees current. New volunteers are required to have certifications by 8/25/15. Current volunteers (approved before 8/25/15) who have certifications more than 60 months old (as of 7/1/16) or no certifications have until 7/1/16 to get updated certifications. Volunteers whose certifications are within 60 months need to renew in time to meet the 60 month deadline. Volunteers whose certifications are otherwise current are required to complete a Current Volunteer Statement to accept responsibility as mandated reporters and to swear or affirm that they are not disqualified from service

working with children {pursuant to§6344(C)},\* or have “not been convicted of an offense similar in nature to those crimes listed in subsection (C) under the laws or former laws” of any other jurisdiction. This Statement should be completed every 60 months as part of renewal, and includes a box to check to indicate 10 year PA residency. Any volunteer not a resident for the past 10 years need not repeat the FBI fingerprint record check; this only needs to be done once. Renewal date is from the oldest current certification.

\*see List of Disqualifiers – Appendix form

Certifications may be obtained electronically, rather than completing and mailing paper forms.

- If application for certification is filed directly by the applicant, the applicant shall provide the Parish Administrator with access to the electronic record of results, or a printed certification.
- If application for certification is filed by the church, the Parish Administrator will receive results of the certification directly, and provide a record of the results to the applicant.

Volunteers must submit all required certifications and internal documents prior to working with children. In lieu of obtaining new certifications, volunteers may submit copies of certifications obtained through other employment or volunteer service which are still current, defined as given within the last 60 months. The Church needs to retain a copy for the files.

Prospective employees “14 years of age or older applying for or holding a paid position as an employee with a program, activity or service, as a person responsible for the child’s welfare or having direct contact with children” must obtain certification as a condition of employment, but may transfer current certifications from other employment. This would include (for example) a Christian Education Director, Youth Pastor, and other church staff expected to have regular contact with children. Direct contact with children is defined by Statue as, “the care, supervision, guidance or control of children, or routine interaction with children.” Employees are required by the CPSL to obtain certifications and sign a swear or affirm statement.

Certifications will be repeated every 60 months, or as otherwise required by state law; and, after a break in service of more than one year. Certifications obtained for employment may be transferred to other employment or volunteer service, as long as they are current. Certifications obtained for volunteer service may be transferred to other volunteer service, but may not be transferred to employment.

Employers may employ applicants who do not have current certifications for positions where they will have contact with children, or supervise those who do, on a provisional

basis for a single period of no more than 90 days, if ALL of the following conditions are met:

1. Applicant has applied for all required certifications and employer has copy/documentation of completed request
2. Employer has no knowledge of anything that would disqualify the applicant pursuant to §6344(C)}\*
3. Applicant swears or affirms in writing he/she is not disqualified from employment related to working with children {pursuant to§6344(C)},\* or “has not been convicted of an offense similar in nature to those crimes listed in subsection (C) under the laws or former laws” of any other jurisdiction. (See PA Prospective Employee Statement.)
4. The employer requires that the applicant not be permitted to work alone with children, and that applicant work in the immediate vicinity of a permanent employee.

\*see List of Disqualifiers – Appendix form

If the information obtained via the required certifications reveals that the applicant is disqualified from employment, the applicant shall be immediately dismissed.

## **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **Provisional Volunteer**

A volunteer may be allowed to serve on a provisional basis, or for a temporary assignment, for a single period no longer than 30 days if the “volunteer is in compliance with the certification standards under the law of the jurisdiction where the volunteer is domiciled.”

†An example of this would be a Vacation Bible School held at the church in which volunteers from other participating churches are helping to care for children. If the volunteers from other churches, including any located outside of PA, have met the certification standards for wherever they live, the church may permit them to care for children for a period not to exceed 30 days. (See Temporary/Provisional Volunteer Form.)

### **Non-Resident Volunteer Certification**

In cases where one or more volunteers, coming from outside the state on a short-term basis that does not exceed 30 days in a calendar year, will be serving with children or are to work on a specific project working with children, these volunteers will not be required to become Approved Adults or get new certification as long as they are “in compliance with the clearance standards under the law of the jurisdiction where the volunteer is domiciled.” Under PA law, the short-term volunteer must provide documentation of certification from employment or other service in the state where he/she lives which would allow work with children in that state. For internal purposes, the Non-Resident Volunteer Form should be completed, and that form, along with the certification documents provided, will be sufficient to allow the volunteer to work with children in this church for that short time.

### **Exchange Visitor**

An individual in possession of a nonimmigrant visa (a J-1 visa), defined as an “Exchange visitor,” is not required to submit certifications if

1. The individual is applying for or holds a paid position with a program, activity or service for a period not to exceed 90 days in a calendar year.
2. The individual has not been employed previously in the Commonwealth or another state, the District of Columbia or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.
3. The individual swears or affirms that the individual has not been disqualified from service based on a founded report of abuse, or committed an offense similar in nature to any of the crimes listed as disqualifying under current or former laws of the United States or one of its territories or possessions, another state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a foreign nation. See Swear or Affirm Statement.

### **Minor Employee**

“An individual between 14 and 17 years of age who applies for or holds a paid position as an employee who is a person responsible for the child’s welfare or a person with direct contact with children through a program, activity or service” is only required to submit the 2 state certifications:

1. If the individual has been a resident of Pennsylvania for the last 10 years or has already received FBI fingerprint certification, and
2. The individual and the individual’s parent or legal guardian swear or affirm in writing that the individual is not disqualified from service based on a founded report of abuse, or conviction of a disqualifying criminal offense. See Swear or Affirm Statement.

## **PART 6: RECORDS**

Applications and related forms for staff and volunteers will be locked in a confidential file under the jurisdiction of the Pastor and Parish Administrator. Certifications are confidential and will only be made available to the Pastor and to the Chair of the Child Protection Committee and the Parish Administrator.

The Pastor and Parish Administrator are responsible for maintaining these records and following these recordkeeping steps:

1. Create and maintain a master list of all personnel and volunteers who have regular contact with children in the course of their work.
2. Determine which reports are possessed, and note the dates of the reports on the list;

- a. For staff and volunteers who have the required background check reports and those reports are less than 60 months old, no new reports are required until 60 months from the date of the existing reports.
  - b. For such personnel and volunteers who do not have the required certifications, or in cases where the required certifications are over 60 months old, new reports are required.
3. Note on the list when the reports need to be renewed, and note on the list the date 60 days before to initiate the process of obtaining renewed reports;
- a. New reports are to be obtained every 60 months from the date of the existing reports.
  - b. New reports are required for all personnel and volunteers who have had a one (1) year break in continuous service.
4. Retain copies of all reports, even ones that are superseded by renewed reports, in confidential locked files; or if reports are obtained electronically ensure digital records are strongly password protected with limited access.

### **Record Retention and Management**

Because any records pertaining to children and youth, and staff/volunteers who work with them, may become the subject of legal proceedings at some future date, no such records should be part of any automatic records destruction plan by the church. This includes child and youth registration and permission forms, as well as staff and volunteer certifications. Such records should only be destroyed with the written approval of the CPC, and in accordance with the state statute of limitations related to sexual abuse of minors. In PA, the statute for filing criminal and civil charges for certain types of sexual abuse of a minor extends to 50 years past the victim's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday; civil complaints may be filed up to 12 years after the victim's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Records may be digitized and stored electronically, in an appropriately secure, password protected manner. The PA CPSL does not have a requirement for how long records should be kept.

## **PART 7: GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

To ensure that a nurturing Christian environment for children/youth is maintained within the congregation, to protect children/youth who participate in activities sponsored by the church from sexual, mental, and/or physical abuse, and to protect the congregation's members from false allegations of abuse, the congregation has adopted the following policy:

**1. Child Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the congregation's children/youth shall not violate that responsibility by intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing physical injury; mental injury; sexual abuse or serious physical neglect of

children/youth; induce or fabricate medical symptoms or any other act described as child abuse in this policy or the laws of our state.

**2. Sexual Abuse Prohibited:** †Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the congregation's children/youth shall not violate that responsibility by having any interaction with a child/youth where the child/youth is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult or a third person regardless of whether or not the behavior involves touching, or by any other act described as sexual abuse in this policy or the laws of our state.

**3. Two Approved Adults Rule:** Two Approved Adults should be present during any church sponsored children/youth activity.

In some instances where unforeseen circumstances result in two Approved Adults not being present (for example, an unexpected absence of a teacher on a Sunday morning) a designated Approved Adult will circulate outside the classroom area or be within easy reach to provide assistance if needed. In a mixed group, whenever possible, a male and a female Approved Adult should be present.

Helpers (youth under age 18 caring for children up to age 12) or occasional care assistants may work under the supervision of Approved Adults.

**4. Visibility:** All activities/meetings with children/youth must be conducted in a way that allows visibility, e.g., glass areas of doors should not be obstructed, curtains/blinds should be open, when possible, door should be open or a window should allow easy observation of the room. Where possible, conduct activities in a public place, with another person within sight and sound of the activities.

Because abuse is sometimes perpetuated by an older, stronger child/youth, do not send two children/youth with a four or more year age difference to an isolated setting, e.g., bathroom, tent, empty classroom.

## **5. Bathroom and Diapering**

In general, children should be encouraged to use the bathroom before and after classes or other activities. In this way parents can assist as needed. If you need to take a child to the toilet, be aware of your visibility and the child's privacy, e.g., adult stands holding public bathroom door open while child enters toilet stall alone.

*Diapering:* Two approved adults must be present when clothes or diapers are being changed. The child's parent can also be recruited to change clothes or a diaper.

*Two and Three Year Olds:* An approved adult must accompany children to and from the bathroom and inform another adult when this takes place. The adult will assist the child only when necessary. If assistance is needed, the adult must leave the stall door open.



*Preschool:* An approved adult must accompany preschoolers to the bathroom. The adult will remain outside the stall. If assistance is required, the approved adult should encourage independence but can assist with minimal tasks if necessary (belts, snaps, etc.).

**6. Empty Room Policy:** After an activity, check rooms to ensure that all participants have vacated the room.

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

- a. Respect a child's/youth's refusal of affection
- b. Be aware of appropriate hand placement. A child/youth or an observer could misinterpret a pat on the bottom or a bear hug. Note that anodyne to body embrace not initiated by a child; a touch on private areas, those areas covered by a bathing suit; or a kiss on the mouth is inappropriate.
- c. Discipline of any type involving physical contact is not permitted.

## **Permission Slips, Medical Release Forms, Overnight Activities, Transportation**

### **8. Permission Slips:**

- a. General-Children/youth must have permission to participate in activities. Parents/guardians need to complete and return a Child and Youth Registration form, which includes pertinent medical information and emergency phone numbers, a medical release, and general permission for field trips. These forms will be updated every year and filed in the church office, and a copy will be given to the parent/ guardian.
- b. Specific-Children/youth must have permission to participate in any overnight activity or any activity that takes place away from church grounds. The permission must be written, signed by a parent or guardian, and must identify the activity in which the child/youth will be participating.

**9. Medical Release Forms for field trips:** All youth participating in a youth group or going on a field trip with either a youth group or the Sunday school must have a Medical Release Form on file before they will be allowed to participate. An original completed form will be kept on file in the Church office. Each time a field trip or overnight event occurs, the copy must be taken with an adult leader while an original form remains in the Church office.

**10. Overnight Activities:** Overnight activities involving children/youth shall be chaperoned by at least two Approved Adults. Boys and girls will sleep in separate areas with at least two approved adults of the same gender directly supervising each group. If



the minimum level of supervision cannot be achieved, the activity must be cancelled; this may result in the loss of deposit fees for which the church cannot be responsible.

**11. Transportation of Children/Youth:** When children/youth are transported for church activities they shall be transported in groups with at least one Approved Adult in each vehicle.

**12. Personal Vehicle Transportation.** To transport children/youth in a personal vehicle, the driver must be 21 years of age or older. Drivers must have a copy of their driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance on file in the church office. Drivers must complete a driver application form prior to the activity, to be kept on file in the church office to be updated annually. Anyone who has had their license revoked or suspended within the past three years will be ineligible to drive for youth activities.

**The following forms are located in the Appendix:**  
**Registration/Medical Information & Release**  
**General Permission – Children & Youth**  
**Parent or Guardian permission for Special Activity**

### **PART 8: NURSERY PROTECTION GUIDELINES**

The Nursery/Child Care Room of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church is designed to provide a place of safety and caring for our youngest church participants, while allowing their parents to participate in worship or activities. As such, the following policy is designed to protect the children, parents and volunteers who participate:

1. Parents will complete a **Nursery Registration/Medical Information & Release form** when the child first enters care and will also receive a copy of the **Nursery Guidelines for Parents**.
2. Parents should sign children in and out in log book or **Nursery Sign-In Sheet** each time children are delivered to care, and children will only be released to those listed on the **Registration** form.
3. Parents should label all bottles, juices, blankets, toys and any other personal belongings. Pacifiers should be attached to the child. Only dry food snacks are allowed in the nursery. Snacks containing nuts are never allowed due to allergies. Small snack items that can be choked on, such as grapes, are not permitted.
4. Discipline Plan: Limit setting is directed toward maximizing the growth and development of the children and is for protecting the group and the individuals within it. Positive reinforcement is the major tool of appropriate discipline. Volunteers will verbalize to the child when she/he is behaving in an inappropriate manner. Volunteers will redirect a child who appears to be

“headed for trouble.” If a child is repeatedly displaying inappropriate behavior and redirecting has not worked, parents/guardian will be asked to come to the nursery. Nursery volunteers **WILL NOT**:

- Use corporal punishment, including spanking
  - Subject children to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation or verbal abuse
  - Deny any child food as a form of punishment
  - Punish any child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
5. If a child needs to proceed to the bathroom, an approved volunteer shall accompany him/her. Stay outside the door and let the child use the toilet. If help is needed with wiping or dressing, help the child while keeping the door to the bathroom open. Encourage the child to wipe him/herself. Let the parent know that the child used the toilet and whether or not assistance was needed. Help the child wash his/her hands thoroughly with soap and running water. Wash your own hands. If a problem arises when a child needs to use the toilet, a parent will be contacted.
  6. Children must be picked up immediately following service or church activities and checked out in the log by a parent or a person designated on the emergency contact form.
  7. At least one parent/guardian shall remain in the church while the child is in the nursery after worship or other official church activities have ended.
  8. Should an incident occur that results in physical injury, parent(s) will be notified and an incident report will be completed.

**The following forms are located in the Appendix**

**Nursery- Registration**

**Nursery- Medical information & Release**

**Nursery- Sign-in sheets**

**Nursery- Guidelines**

## **PART 9: CHILDREN AND YOUTH CLASSROOM PROTECTION GUIDELINES**

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all classroom activities. We also expect all employees and volunteers who work with minors to complete and submit an application to be Approved Adults.

- Parents will complete a **Registration/ Medical Information & Release, and General Permission – Children & Youth Form** when a child first enters an education classroom. Children will only be released to those persons listed on the form.
- Copies of this policy referring to general or specific protection guidelines will be provided to the parents of children attending Sunday School and youth group

activities.

- In every classroom there will be at least two Approved Adults.
- No teacher shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for purposes of toileting, clean up from craft or art projects, or care of injury, except when necessary. In this case the door to the bathroom and classroom shall be kept open.
- No teacher working with our children shall place him/herself in a compromising situation by being alone with a child or children out of sight of other teachers or aides.
- Normally teachers who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom door while the child is inside.
- If a child needs assistance with dressing, undressing or cleanup, two Approved Adults shall be present.
- If a child needs assistance with dressing, undressing or cleanup, and only one Approved Adult is available, the door to the bathroom shall be left open.
- If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, the parent will be notified at pickup.
- If for any reason, a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom, the classroom door shall remain ajar.
- Children in grades 3-12 can use the bathrooms unescorted, provided they return within a reasonable time frame. This privilege can be granted or rescinded at the teacher's discretion.
- When Sunday School teachers of the Youth Class (grades 6-12) and the Pastor and/or teachers of the Confirmation Class take a class off of the church grounds they must have the signed, written permission form from each youth's parent or guardian in their possession. The original form must be kept with the teacher, and a copy of the form kept in the Church office.
- Report any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker or volunteer and a child promptly to the individual designated in this policy.
- Limit setting is directed toward maximizing the growth and development of the children and for protecting the group and the individuals within it. Positive reinforcement is the major tool of appropriate disciplining. Verbalize to the child when he/she is behaving in an appropriate manner. Redirect a child who appears to be 'headed for trouble'. If a child is repeatedly displaying inappropriate behavior, and redirecting has not worked, and talking to the child has not worked, then the parent will be notified. The teacher will pass on information of repeated inappropriate behavior to the Sunday School Superintendent. **No one shall** use corporal punishment, including spanking, humiliation or verbal abuse.

### **PART 10: KEY POLICY**

1. Certain people are authorized by virtue of their position in the church to hold keys. These people include, but are not limited to, paid employees, officers of the church, committee chairs and youth group leaders. Church Council will approve the list of positions to whom keys are given and their current holders once each year.
2. Any other person who seeks possession of a key to the church facilities will have

- a clearly stated reason for needing a key and will need to be approved by the Church Council.
3. The keys will be assigned by the Parish Administrator, following approval of the recipient by the Church Council. The Parish Administrator will distribute or arrange for the distribution of the keys once they are assigned. If there is a need for additional keys, the Parish Administrator will obtain new keys with Church Council approval.
  4. Records of key holders will be maintained by the church's Parish Administrator and kept on file. Keys shall be returned when they are no longer needed by the holder, and the return will be documented.
  5. It will be the responsibility of the Parish Administrator to monitor who is in possession of keys and request the return of keys from persons no longer authorized to hold them. Keys are not to be loaned to unauthorized persons, duplicated, or kept beyond the time that they are needed. Authorized key holders may loan their key to a spouse if the spouse has signed the Key Receipt Form and the Statement of Compliance. Authorized Youth leaders may share a key as long as each leader has signed the Key Receipt Form and the Statement of Compliance.
  6. Key holders will be required to sign a Statement of Compliance, and submit a Key Receipt Form.
  7. No key holder will use his/her key to access the church with a child or children not his or her own (or of whom the key holder is not a legal guardian or foster parent) at a time when there is no church related activity being held in which the child and the key holder are involved. This is intended to prevent a situation where an adult key holder is alone with a child in the facility. In the rare case an exception is to be made to this provision, a written note from the child's parent or legal guardian must be submitted to the church office and approved by the Pastor or Safe Church Advocate prior to entry.

#### **PART 11: PROVIDING COMMUNITY FOR KNOWN SEXUAL OFFENDERS**

***Brothers, if someone is caught in sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently....Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV)***

Individuals who have been adjudicated by a court or child protective services findings as sexual offenders **and/or have admitted to past sexual abuse of children** and are willing to abide by the guidelines set forth in this policy, are welcome to attend worship services and adult educational activities. Such individuals are hereafter referred to as "known sexual offenders" or "offenders."

The minimum guidelines by which any known offender may participate in the life of the congregation are set forth below, and shall be incorporated into a covenant specific for the individual offender which is to be signed by the offender prior to participation.

Depending on the circumstances and at the discretion of the CPC, additional restrictions may be incorporated into an individual covenant. If an individual is on probation or parole, specific provisions related to contact with children, participation in counseling, and others, will be incorporated into the covenant. The individual covenant may also permit participation in additional church activities (other than those involving children) if circumstances warrant.

An individual on probation or parole for a child sexual offense may have restrictions placed on church attendance as part of their probation/parole condition. On occasion, an exception to a “no church attendance” provision of probation or parole may be made by an officer of the court, based on the church’s capacity to manage the offender in a way that keeps them from contact with children. Any individual on probation or parole must provide the (pastor) with a copy of the probation and parole agreement, including its terms and conditions, as well as the contact information for the parole or probation officer assigned.

**REQUIRED Minimum guidelines under which a known sexual offender may participate:**

- 1. Offenders are expected to comply fully** with all restrictions and requirements placed upon them as a result of any legal actions, and provide the designated Pastor or Child Advocate with copies of any judgments, conditions of parole, or other documents in which restrictions on or requirements as a result of convictions or judgments are stated.
- 2. Offenders are expected to participate in a professional counseling program**, specifically addressing their abusive behaviors. Offenders will provide the name of the agency and mental health professional to the Pastor or Child Advocate at the time of request for participation. The offender may be asked to periodically sign a limited disclosure authorization for the therapist to verify to the Pastor or Child Advocate that the individual is in treatment. In a case of extreme financial hardship where the offender cannot afford counseling (and is not required by the court to be in counseling) the Pastor or Safe Church Advocate will work with the offender to create an alternative plan that may include regular pastoral counseling, participation in a community-based group for sexual offenders, one-on-one mentoring with a congregation member that has received at least three (3) hours of training on working with sexual offenders as stipulated in this policy for “supervisors” (see section on Training & Education) or other affordable venues.

3. **Offenders will not accept any leadership** or representational position within or on behalf of this church. **Known sexual offenders can never become Approved Adults.**
4. **The CPC will assign supervisors to any offender participating in the life of the congregation.** They will be adults who are not related to the offender. They will receive training by a professional agency that will include information on sexual offender dynamics, the long-term impact of sexual abuse on victims, and any specific conditions related to participation under the specific covenant established. If the offender is on probation or parole, the training may need to be approved by the officer of the court handling the case.
5. **The CPC will identify a small group of “covenant partners” for offenders.** This small group will provide spiritual, emotional and practical support and will meet with the offender on a regular basis. The supervisors and “covenant partners” will not be the same individuals.
6. **The offender may participate in worship in the sanctuary and attend adult Sunday school classes.** The CPC may designate a specific service and time for attendance. Any other activities the offender is permitted to participate in will be detailed in the covenant.
7. **A supervisor must accompany the offender at all times when on church property.**
8. **At no time should the offender deliberately place him or herself in or remain in any location in or around the church facilities which would cause undue distress to others.**
9. **At least twice each calendar year and as otherwise requested,** the offender shall meet with and report to the designated Pastor and a designated member of the CPC regarding status of adherence to these guidelines.
10. **If the offender should decide to relocate membership (or substantially attend) another congregation,** the designated pastor will seek to inform the leadership of that congregation of the conditions of these guidelines.

## **PART 12: TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

### **Policy on Education and Training**

This policy will be available to the entire congregation in a manner and at a web-based and/or physical location easily accessible. New members will be directed to the web or physical location, and/or given a copy of the policy.

In order to be an Approved Adult, a volunteer or staff member must participate in an initial training that covers recognizing and responding to child abuse, mandated reporting requirements, and church guidelines and practices. A refresher course for all Approved Adults will be held at least every five years. Volunteers or staff who cannot attend sessions in person will be required to review a tape (video, audio) or a power point of the training prior to serving with youth. Adults will not be approved to take care of children until after they have completed the required training.

All Approved Adults and staff will receive a full copy of the Child/Youth Protection Policy and Guidelines, and sign a Child Protection Covenant.

### **Procedures for Education and Training**

#### **Staff and Volunteers**

1. Training will be offered on an as needed basis. It will be considered a mandatory part of volunteer training and employee orientation. The initial training for each new staff person and volunteer will be at least 2.5 hours.
2. Once an individual has participated in the initial training, a refresher training of at least one hour will be required every five to ensure that the individual's knowledge is current and accurate.
3. The church's Parish Administrator will maintain a record of who has received training and the dates.
4. Training will include the use of professional training materials on child abuse, including specific information about child sexual abuse, behavioral signs, and how to respond to a disclosure; the grooming process sexual offenders often use to engage children; a review of policies and procedures that are specific to ZELC and pertinent to the work in which the employee or volunteer will be involved, information about mandated reporting and instruction in the use and completion of the various forms.

#### **Parents and other Congregants**

Child Abuse Awareness education will be offered at least once each year for parents and other congregants, and shall include information about the spiritual, as well as psychological and physical, impact of abuse. The educational sessions will be at least one hour in length, may be provided in various formats, such as an adult education



class, a whole-congregation meeting, a special workshop in the evening or weekend, etc.

### **Children and Youth**

Christian Education curriculums on healthy physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries, including sexual abuse prevention, shall be offered for several weeks at least once every 2 years. The purpose is to provide our children and teens with the opportunity to receive age-appropriate information in a faith-based context to help them to recognize inappropriate conduct on the part of an adult or older child, and to empower them to say no, and tell a “safe adult” at church, home, school. Teachers will be provided with any needed training, as well as curriculum material to use.

### **Supervisors of Sexual Offenders**

Should the church decide to welcome a known sexual offender into fellowship in accordance with the guidelines established in this policy, a group of supervisors will receive at minimum three (3) hours of training to include the following items prior to welcoming the offender to the congregation.

If the offender is currently on probation or parole, permission by the supervising county office to include the offender, as well as their approval of the organization providing the training and the curriculum, may be required.

#### **1. Dynamics of sexual offending** (blame, impulsiveness, denial, deception; role of fantasies)

- a. Summary information about different types of offenders
- b. General characteristics of a pedophile, lifestyle issues, access to victims, orientation
- c. The grooming process
- d. Sex offense therapy (brief overview) – Use of polygraph

#### **2. Dynamics of victimization** (shame, secrecy, trauma symptoms)

- a. Defining child sexual abuse under PA CPSL
- b. Long and Short Term Consequences of child sexual abuse

#### **3. Role of the supervisor**

- a. Close accompaniment of offender while on church property
- b. Assure no contact with children, including verbal/emotional/physical
- c. Monitor offender compliance with policy & covenant guidelines

**4. Specific information about the particular offender**, including any terms of probation or parole, and guidelines agreed to by covenant with the church.  
**The church will inform membership of the inclusion of known sexual offender and the agreed upon guidelines using various means of communication.**

### **PART 13: USE OF FACILITIES BY OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS**

Outside groups and organizations using the church facilities on a recurring basis where children are on-site as part of the organizational activity are to be made aware of this policy and must adhere to it or must provide evidence of their own policy and procedures, subject to review and acceptance by (Name of Church).

- **If their policy does not include a “two adult” rule; certifications and training for volunteers; procedures for immediate reporting of suspected child abuse to Childline; and a prohibition on adults being alone in the facility with a child not their own, the organization is required to comply with these provisions.**

An adult representative of any outside group will be required to sign a Statement of Compliance for the sponsoring organization before use of the facilities will be granted.