

**Child Protection Policy
of St. Paul Lutheran Church**

Safeguarding God's Children



Updated July 2026

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Part A: St Paul Lutheran Mission Statement

As people called by God, we gather to worship and praise Him in a safe sanctuary where all people are invited to learn and grow in the word of God with unity and fellowship.

We support each other in faith and obedience to Christ. We love, care, and respect on another as God's people. We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus. We pursue God's love and peace in every area of life.

The faithfulness of our gracious Lord provides sense to our days and hope for our future.

Part B: Our Commitment

The following policies and procedures are to help ensure that the ministry of St. Paul Lutheran is a place where all people can feel they are safe, loved, and valued. We are committed to providing a safe environment for all.

This Safety and Security Policy is provided to:

- Affirm and Protect Children and Youth
- Affirm and Protect Volunteers and Staff
- Raise Awareness
- Be a leader and advocate in our community
- Affirm and Protect St Paul Lutheran as a church

Part C: Volunteer Responsibilities & Procedures

Parental Responsibility

All parents are 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 and should be promptly picked-up after all scheduled church events.

Supervision Procedures

1. Contact with children and youth at St. Paul Lutheran Church and/or its sponsored activities is a privilege, and not a right. Adults responsible for any church activity or program involving contact with children/youth will be reviewed, must consent to complete all required background checks, and should complete a yearly training program that outlines the guidelines and expectations that are laid out in this document. These steps are crucial to creating a safe and hospitable environment for children to grow in their faith.

2. Two Deep Leadership: Employees and volunteer workers are encouraged not to be alone with minors, but rather to work in groups or at least pairs. This is true in the church building and at church sponsored events off-campus. Doors are to be left open if there is only one adult in a room with a minor. However, care should be taken so that no adult is left alone with a minor that is not their child. If necessary, speaking to a minor one-on-one should only be done in a public setting with others present.

3. Open Door Policy: When church activities take place, we encourage leaders to keep curtains, blinds, and doors open whenever possible. Reasonable expectations can be made due to the nature of the activity and noise, but all volunteers and staff should be aware that the pastor, program coordinators, and church leadership retain access to all rooms/spaces at any time.

4. Drop Off/Pick-up: Supervision of minors should be provided before and after an 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 all events and activities, parents are required to promptly pick-up their children/youth, and no minors are to be left unattended in the building at any time.

4. Parental Permission including signed medical release and emergency contacts is required before taking minors on trips.

5. Respect of Privacy: Adult leaders need to respect the privacy of minors in situations such as use of rest rooms, changing rooms or taking showers on overnight outings. Adult leaders should only intrude insofar as health and safety require. All adults also are required 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 assistance with buttoning or zipping, have them come out into the hall for your help. Children participating in church activities without the accompaniment of their parents/guardians, should be fully toilet trained and independent.

6. Overnight Guidelines: A minimum of two adults should be present at an overnight event. If participants are both male and female, the adults should both be male and female. If these conditions cannot be met, the events 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. The adult also must not occupy the same room with a single minor that is not their child. Males and females should sleep in separate rooms/areas at events and have separate access to bathroom facilities. When separate facilities are not available, clear and distinct times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted for showers.

7. Transportation: Transportation to and from events is the responsibility of the families. If families arrange and coordinate transportation to/from church events, it is

understood to be done at your own risk. If youth drive or ride with another youth to/from a church sponsored event, it is at your own risk. Any officially arranged transportation to/from church sponsored events is only to 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 in trip plans should have prior consent of the parent and be reported to the next person in the line of responsibility (vocal consent is acceptable).

8. Touch: When possible, adults should attempt to avoid any/all physical contact with a minor. Adults are required to avoid all inappropriate touch. See guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate affection on page 6-7.

9. 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 or suggestive comments, showing pornographic sexual material and the exposure of sexual parts of any person's body.

10. Volunteers should be alert for inappropriate behavior or relationships with minors. Questionable behaviors should be reported to the proper supervising staff person or pastor.

11. Use of alcohol/drugs is prohibited for adults and minors while participating in church sponsored events. Volunteers should ensure that they are not under the influence of any substance, prior to volunteering for any church program. Those (adults or minors) found or suspected to be under the influence of substances, or with substances in their possession, will be asked to leave the premises. In the case of minors who are in possession or under the influence of substances, parents or legal guardians will be notified. Supervising adults should be informed of prescription drugs brought to an event by a minor.

12. Firearms: The possession of firearms is prohibited during events.

13. 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.

14. Dating: Adult leaders cannot date or be romantically involved with youth.

15. Reporting of Abuse: It is the policy of this church that everyone who has cause to suspects a minor has been or will be the victim of abuse or neglect, must report the case immediately (within 24 hours) by telephone or by a personal visit to St Paul staff and/or appropriate authorities. Concern for the alleged victim, good judgement and open communication are the standards surrounding the reporting of an alleged case

of abuse. Keep calm, stay with the participant and know that you don't have to deal with the situation or information alone. All reports are treated with confidentiality by St Paul staff and authorities. Those who care for children and youth are mandated to report abuse!

Part D: How to Report Abuse

If you suspect a child is being harmed or abused, reporting your suspicions may protect the child and get help for the family. Responding quickly is essential to preventing or stopping abuse. All adult volunteers and leaders are required to report suspected abuse within 24 hours. Reports should be made to our congregation's reporting contact (listed below):

Our Congregation's Reporting Contact:
Rev. Heath Queen
Phone: (740) 412-1559
Office: 232 W. Minnesota St. Le Center, MN 56057

If a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, call 911.

Protection for Reporters

No civil or criminal liability for good faith reporters.
Identity of reporter not divulged (except with consent or by court order)
Penalties for retaliation against reporter.
Civil protection for good faith investigative activities.

As people entrusted with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult's care, we must report abuse!

Part E: Display of Affection Guidelines

What is generally understood to be an appropriate display of affection can vary in interpretation based on age, sex, upbringing, family socialization, and life experience. Therefore, adults should generally assume a "no touch" policy. However, under certain circumstances, physical contact may be unavoidable. In those moments, the following are helpful guidelines for understanding what can be considered appropriate, and what is certainly not appropriate:

Appropriate:

Ask permission before touching
Child initiated and quick Hugs
Pats on shoulder or back
Handshakes or High-Fives
Verbal Praise

- Touching hands, face, shoulders, and arms
- Arm around the shoulders
- Hold hands in prayer when a person is upset
- Sitting close to small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding or picking up children three years old and younger

Inappropriate:

- Any form of unwanted affection
- Touching bottoms, chest, or genital areas
- Lying down or sleeping beside children
- Massages
- Patting children on thigh, knee, leg
- Tickling or wrestling
- Touching or hugging from behind
- Games involving inappropriate touching
- Kissing
- Showing affection in isolated rooms of the building
- Compliments that relate to physique or body development

Generally and as a best practice, adults should always ask permission before initiating any kind of physical touch.

Part F: Fire Evacuation Plan

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 St Paul Lutheran Church located at 232 West Minnesota Street in Le Center has a fire.
2. Staff, ushers, teachers, helpers, and leadership will immediately begin to assist and classes, groups, and volunteers out of the building through the nearest exit.
3. Classroom teachers will move students directly out the nearest exit. PARENTS SHOULD NOT TRY TO GET THEIR CHILD FROM THE CLASSROOM 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 at the elementary school parking lot, a safe distance away from the structure and emergency vehicles. PARENTS MUST MEET CHILDREN AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARKING LOT. DO NOT TAKE CHILDREN OFF OF THE GROUNDS UNTIL THEY HAVE BEEN ACCOUNTED FOR. Any

available adults will help supervise 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 bottle neck 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: Education building - Furnace room. At the front church entrance stairway to the balcony, the sacristy, main kitchen, janitor room, and church office.

7. The staff as leaving the building will have pre-assigned areas (with focus on bathrooms) to check for any people left behind in evacuation before leaving the building themselves.

There are three exits that lead directly outside: One from the basement or the Gathering Place to the south, one in the middle of the education building out through the office door, and one on the north side of the education building. Sunday school rooms should be posted with the nearest exit which should be used. If that exit is blocked by fire, teachers should calmly lead the children to the next closest exit.

Part G: Severe Weather Plan

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 in doors as soon as you are notified
- Always have at least one adult in each room that the children are in
- Keep children calm by remaining calm yourself

In the event of a storm warning, all individuals will move quickly and calmly to the inside hallway in the basement of the education building.

If the area is under storm warning or tornado watch keep the children in the hallway of the education building.

Be prepared to move to safer areas under stairs if necessary (tornado activity)

Remain calm and be sure children are not left unattended

If the area is under a tornado warning:

- Quickly and calmly move the children to safer areas of the education building such as under the stairways
- Keep a battery-operated device on hand for weather updates
- Keep children and yourself calm (leading them in song, sharing happy stories)

Part H: Bullying Policy

We completely oppose bullying of any form and will not tolerate it. 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 a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment.

Principles

- Students have a right to learn free from intimidation and fear
- The needs of the victim are paramount
- We will not tolerate bullying behavior
- Bullied students will be listened to
- Reported incidents will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is an act of aggression, causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to someone. It can take many forms; physical, verbal, making gestures, extortion, and exclusion. It is an abuse of power. It can be planned and organized, or it may be unintentional. It may be perpetrated by individuals or by groups of students.

Forms of Bullying

- Physical violence such as hitting, pushing, or spitting at another student
- Interfering with another student's property, by stealing, hiding, or damaging it
- Using offensive names when addressing another student
- Teasing or spreading rumors about another student or his/her family
- Belittling another student's abilities and achievements
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about another student
- Excluding another student from a group activity
- Ridiculing another student's appearance, way of speaking or personal mannerisms
- Misusing technology (internet and mobiles) to hurt or humiliate another person

Our Responsibilities as Staff and Volunteers

- Foster in our children self-esteem, self-respect, and respect for others
- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behavior we expect of our students

- Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every student learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is bullied and to the bully and the importance of telling an adult about bullying when it happens
- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying
- Listen to children who have been bullied, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them
- Volunteers will report suspected cases of bullying to the Pastor at which time the Pastor will follow up any complaint by a parent or leader about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action which has been taken
- Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures

The Responsibilities of Students

- Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity
- Intervene to protect the student who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so
- Report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel and climate of secrecy to help prevent further instances

The Responsibilities of Parents

- Watch for signs of distress or unusual behavior in your children, which might be evidence of bullying
- Advise children to report any bullying to the staff and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other students
- Advise your children not to retaliate violently to any forms of bullying
- Be sympathetic and supportive towards children, reassuring them that appropriate actions will be taken
- Keep a written record of any reported instances of bullying
- Inform the church of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved
- Cooperate with the church, if your children are accused of bullying, try to ascertain the truth
- Point out the implications of bullying, both for the children who are bullied and for the bullies themselves

The Responsibilities of All

- Work together to combat and hopefully in time to eradicate bullying

Procedures for Dealing with Incidents of Bullying Behavior

- If any bullying is reported at a church event, both victim and accused will have a private hearing for an explanation of what took place
- Notes will be taken of both private discussions, and records will be kept
- Parents of all involved students will be notified via telephone as soon as possible
- An investigation of the incident will take place by church staff member
- Feedback will be given to those concerned as any further information is found
- Sanctions will be put in place as necessary for those found guilty of bullying

Part I: Background Check for Staff and Volunteers

We will conduct a criminal background check on all individuals that serve in any position that puts them in contact with minors. This includes all members of the staff, teachers, mentors, chaperones, and anyone else identified as appropriate. Background checks will be performed by St Paul Lutheran regardless of any other checks that may have been conducted by the individual's place of employment.

The findings of all background checks will be considered confidential and maintained in a secure place. The process will be administered by two of three people, the Pastor, the Council President, and the Office Manager. Individuals identified as required for a background check must complete the following process:

- 1) Complete authorization form for a background check.
- 2) A background check will be completed through a reputable company.
- 3) When the completed background check is received it will be reviewed to ensure no issues were identified. Information will then be securely filed.
- 4) In the event that an issue is identified, the Pastor and Council President will respond as necessary. If the two disagree on the findings, they will call on a third person from the Youth and Education Committee to make the final decision on the identified issues pertinence to the position applied for.

Part J: Guidelines for Photographs at St Paul Lutheran

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.

Permission will be sought to display photos of children from a parent or legal guardian for all children ages 17 and younger using no names. (Each year on the SS registration form).

Credit for who took a particular photo will be given if desired by the photographer. Photos will be removed immediately upon request.

Part K: Social Media Guidelines

These social media guidelines may apply to all online tools for sharing content and discussing information, including but not limited to, social websites, blogs, message boards, wikis, podcasts, image and video-sharing sites, live webcasting and real time web communications such as email, text messaging, etc. Because this is a constant evolving area, this policy applies to all new social media platforms whether or not they are specifically mentioned in this policy. This policy covers all communication and use of these tools that can or could be construed as representing St. Paul Lutheran Church and/or it's ministries and programs.

Members Should:

- Be responsible in their personal use of social media platforms and take care that their personal profiles and content are not assumed to speak on behalf of St. Paul or any of its ministries.
- When using social media for official church communications, be selective. Use the right medium for your message. A blog or social network might not be the right place for messages intended for a small group, and a group email or other means might be best.
- Leaders/Pastors are encouraged to use church sponsored/sanctioned digital communication tools and groups to maintain contact with youth members. Adults should refrain from initiating and/or participating in one-on-one video chats with youth.
- Be smart. A blog or community post is visible to the entire world. Remember that what you write will be public - and once it is on the web, almost anyone has access to it even once it has been removed. The content and nature of any post might be perceived as the voice of the church and may be misconstrued as church policies and procedures.
- In all church sponsored groups or digital communities, the following apply:
 - Identify yourself.
 - Use real identities to the greatest extent possible.
 - Anonymous posts or comments are not allowed.
 - Take care to safeguard the privacy of others. Do not publish the personal information of others in the community without their permission, or in the case of minors, anyone age 17 and under. Written permission by their parents or legal guardians is mandatory. Never disclose any information that can identify a particular person, including name, phone number, address, or email without written consent.
 - 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.