

Church Worker Abuse Guidelines For Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church and School Updated Jan 8, 2011

1.0 INTRODUCTION: Scripture requires Christians to apply guidelines provided in Matthew 18 when anyone sins against him/her. The guidelines in this document are not meant to replace Matthew 18 but are intended to supplement Matthew 18 to aid the congregation and its workers in preventing, reporting, and responding to incidents of abuse including sexual harassment and sexual abuse. Even though we must forgive those who recant during the Matthew process, there is no requirement to keep them in positions of trust, and, sometimes may not allow them to be members of our congregation. The Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church and School will not tolerate any kind of abuse by its called pastors, professional church workers, paid employees and volunteers. . Sexual abuse shall be treated on a zero tolerance basis. All persons associated with the programs and ministries of the congregation are expected to maintain appropriate boundaries and conduct themselves at all times so as to provide a safe and caring atmosphere for all. It shall be a prime objective of these guidelines to insure that Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church and School views all sexual activity between a church worker and any member of the congregation they are not married to, as SEXUAL ABUSE that is wrong, unethical and evil. Any church worker found to be guilty of sexual abuse will be subject to advertised dismissal, removal from any church call list, and reported to law enforcement authorities for criminal prosecution when a law has been broken.

2.0 DEFINITIONS:

2.1 Pastors: Pastors (including assistant and associate pastors) are those included on the clergy roster of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and serving Bethlehem by means of a divine call. This also includes Pastors serving Bethlehem during absences of the regular Pastor(s) due to vacation, sabbatical, etc. and during a vacancy.

2.2 Professional Church Workers: Church workers include commissioned ministers (i.e. certified teachers, directors of Christian education, deaconesses); certified professional church workers (i.e. directors of Christian outreach, lay ministers, lay teachers, parish assistants, parish workers); and vicars.

2.3 Paid Employees: Paid employees include all day school teachers and school faculty hired without a divine call and serving in paid positions. This category also includes administrative staff such as secretaries, janitors and others hired to serve the congregation or school in paid positions. Other paid positions include church organists and choir directors.

2.4 Volunteers: Volunteers include elected officers and non-elected or appointed members of boards and committees. This category also includes Sunday School teachers and officers of Bethlehem auxiliary organizations such as LWML, and AMOB. Volunteers also include the many people serving the congregation and school in organized groups such as the choirs, alter committee, church property volunteers, PTA, and other recognized volunteers serving in a variety of capacities.

2.5 Church Worker: For the sake of brevity this term may be used below as a general reference to people in positions described in definitions 2.1 through 2.4, above.

2.6 Abuse: The general category of abuse includes mistreatment, cruelty, violence, insults, name-calling, verbal abuse or other offensive behavior serious enough to cause deep personal hurt or disruption of the congregation or school

2.7 Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment as a form of abuse is defined as unwanted attention, touching, kissing, hugging, holding and verbal harassment of a sexual nature. It can also include sexually-oriented humor or language, displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, asking questions or making comments about sexual behavior or preference, obscene or harassing phone calls, stalking, inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance. The harassing behavior can have sexual contact as its goal.

2.8 Sexual Abuse: For purposes of these guidelines the definition of Sexual Abuse is distinctly separated from Sexual Harassment. Sexual abuse is a situation in which the church worker takes advantage of the vulnerability of a congregation/school member, client, employee, student, vicar/intern or other person by causing or allowing that person to engage in sexual contact within the professional relationship. (Sexual contact is NOT limited to sexual intercourse.) Church worker sexual abuse is a boundary violation; it is always an improper and harmful use of that relationship. It is the abuse of power, resources, privilege and trust. Sexual abuse misconduct generally does not occur quickly. Often, warning signs exist that indicate something is wrong.

2.9 Boundaries: Boundaries are used to designate and preserve times, places, spaces, relationships, ideas and people for a specific purpose, safely and effectively. They encourage respect and regard for the dignity and safety of others. They help to remind and prevent us from taking or using what is not ours to use or to possess. Boundaries help clarify expectations and purpose. They allow us to proceed in trust that relationships are dedicated to certain purposes so that we won't be violated in any way. Boundaries assure we are using time, space, things, feelings and relationships in the most appropriate way.

2.10 Intervention Team: A committee appointed by the District President and the Board of Directors. This team will be comprised of both males and females. The makeup of the team may include professional church workers, congregation members, therapists trained in issues involving professional sexual misconduct, attorneys, District Board of Directors member, and/or Social Ministry Staff Counselor. Members of the Intervention Team will receive adequate training in the dynamics of professional sexual misconduct, and in techniques for investigating allegations of professional sexual misconduct. Once allegations have been investigated, the Intervention Team will make recommendations to the District President for a course of action.

2.11 Advocate: An advocate is a person that provides support and assists the complainant(s) through the investigative process. The role of an advocate is not to speak for the complainant(s). Their role is to inform the complainant(s) about their rights within the investigative process and be a supportive presence to the complainant(s) when meeting with the Intervention Team. The advocate for a complainant cannot be a member of the Intervention Team that investigates that particular complainant's allegation¹. (1 from Minnesota North District, Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church).

3.0 PREVENTION:

3.1 Worker Selection: All persons being considered for positions having influence over children, whether called, hired, elected or volunteer shall be required to fill out a screening form. Called and hired personnel shall be interviewed and have a law enforcement authority background check performed. Any volunteer or elected person considered for a position where they will be allowed to be alone with minors on a regular basis shall be interviewed and have a law enforcement authorities background check performed.

3.2 Training:

3.2.1 Worker: All church workers shall be provided a job description, a complete definition of boundaries they are expected to maintain, the zero tolerance policy of the church when it comes to sexual abuse, the definitions of sexual abuse, and training on sexual abuse recognition and prevention

3.2.2 Congregation: Once a year the congregation shall be offered a training/informational session to identify boundaries we expect all church workers to maintain, to educate all on how to recognize the grooming process predators use to prepare their victims for abuse, the need for early reporting, and to whom it should be reported. A brochure containing the training information shall be made available to new people joining the church and those that do not receive the once-a-year training.

4.0 REPORTING: Any abuse, especially sexual abuse, observed or experienced should be reported. If a member of the congregation observes or experiences abuse it should be reported to the individual's Elder unless the Elder is the accused in which case it should be reported to the Chairman of the Board of Elders or a Pastor. If a School employee or school student observes or experiences abuse it should be reported to the School Principal unless the Principal is the accused in which case it should be reported to a teacher or the Chairman of the School Board. The report should be factual containing: 1. Description of the abuse, 2. Name(s) of people involved, 3. Date, 4. Time, 5. Activity during which it occurred, and 6. The names of any others present at the time that could verify the allegation. (Confirmation by another person is not required). Even the appearance of wrong-doing should be reported.

4.1 Alternative Reporting: Anyone that feels intimidated or uncomfortable about reporting an incident may enlist the help of another person they trust to help them. A list of trained Victim's Advocates is included at the end of these guidelines. They are prepared to help those who want someone to represent them at the reporting conversation and/or help them make a written report.

4.2 Bethlehem Lutheran School Special Reporting Requirements: IAW Ohio Law, Section 2151.421 of the Revised Code "REQUIRES immediate reporting of known or suspected alleged child abuse and neglect to the children services board, the county department of human services exercising the children services function, or a municipal or county peace officer in the county in which the child resides or in which the abuse or neglect is occurring or has occurred."

5.0 RESPONSE: (It is understood that a response team to handle certain cases of sexual abuse by a Pastor or professional church workers will be formed by the Ohio District in the future, in which case, some of the following may be handled by that team. Until then, the following shall be performed by the responsible church officials.) Any report will be treated as an allegation until supported by evidence. No one will be suspended or dismissed based on gossip, however, reports that someone else told of an abuse incident will be investigated. The official receiving the report shall submit the allegation to the Chairman of the Board of Elders who shall call a special meeting to determine action to be taken. Any overt sexual abuse of a minor shall be reported immediately to the law enforcement authorities by the Chairman of the Board of Elders.

5.1 Suspected Abuse: When an allegation has been made that someone suspects abuse is about to occur or that someone is being set-up for abuse - or hears that someone else is talking about an abuse situation involving church workers, the responsible church organization (Board of Elders or School Board) will investigate. This is the case where an abuse has not been witnessed or the witness is reluctant to report it.

5.2 Abuse reported in the School: When The School Principal receives a report of abuse witnessed or experienced by a teacher, student, or school employee the Principal shall report it immediately to the proper civil authority, and keep the Director of the School Board and the Chairman of the Board of Elders informed of all of these events. The civil authorities are responsible for investigating reports of this nature.

5.3 Abuse Reported to the Board of Elders: When abuse has been reported to the Chairman of the Board of Elders either by the victim or indirectly through an intermediary such as our trained advocates or School Principal, or other person, the Board of Elders will conduct an investigation with the following exceptions:

5.3.1 In all cases involving sexual abuse complaints against the Pastor or professional church worker the District President will be asked to conduct the investigation. For cases involving sexual abuse of a minor by the Pastor or professional church worker, the law enforcement authorities will be notified immediately and the District President will be kept informed on the progress of the law enforcement authority investigation. In the latter case, the Board of Elders will serve as the LCMS agent unless relieved by the District President in favor of an outside agent.

5.3.2 In all cases of alleged sexual abuse of a minor (not a School student), the law enforcement authorities will be notified immediately by the Chairman of the Board of Elders or the School Principal. The responsible church officers and boards will give complete open cooperation in the official law enforcement authority investigation. The Board of Elders, or the School Board in the case of a day school student, shall serve as the Church's agent during the law enforcement authority investigation.

5.3.3 In cases of alleged abuse by a worker employed by the school, where the accused is a schoolteacher (not a called teacher) or School employee, the School Board shall perform the investigation for all non-sexual complaints and sexual complaints of an adult victim. If it involves sexual abuse of a minor the School Principle Principal will report it to the law enforcement authorities and inform the Chairman of the Board of Elders. The School Board shall serve as the Church's agent during the law enforcement authority investigation.

5.3.4 Alleged abuse that falls outside the definition of church and school worker abuse will be handled by the Pastors and Board of Elders.

5.4 Privacy: Allegations shall be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality. The well being of victims shall be a primary concern and shall be provided with professional counseling if requested. The accused shall be treated with dignity and support. Care will be taken when the reporting individual is a potential victim. If necessary, the Elders will appoint and convene an Intervention Team to investigate the charges, recommend courses of action to aid the victim(s) and against the accused. The Elders further may obtain a trained advocate or professional consultant to help with the questioning of the reporting individual(s) and/or victim(s). If, after questioning, the allegation is determined to be credible the accused will be suspended (with pay if a paid worker) pending the results and recommendations of the Intervention Team. The utmost discretion will be employed to protect the victim(s) and the accused.

5.5 Removal from Position: If the accused is found to be guilty, the matter shall be submitted by the Board of Elders or the School Board to the Voters' Assembly for action to depose a Pastor or professional church worker respectively in accordance with Article 3, Section 3 of the Church By-laws. In all other cases the President of the Congregation shall issue a letter releasing the individual from any further employment or service in the congregation.

6.0 CARE OF VICTIMS:

Any person proven to have experienced to sexual abuse by a church worker shall be considered a victim. The congregation will provide counseling or other appropriate professional care for the victim(s) if requested. If the victim's name(s) becomes known in the congregation one or more briefing sessions will be given to the congregation to insure that the victim(s) is/are treated with kind, considerate loving care.

7.0 VICTIM ADVOCATES:

If you believe you are being victimized in any way by a church worker please report it to your Elder. If you want to discuss it with someone that has been trained to help victims, contact one of the people listed below. They will keep all conversations confidential unless you allow them to go forward provided what you describe is not a criminal act.

Pastor Casci-----426-6463	Helga Hemphill-----233-0791
Joe Clark-----879-1807	Tom Hitzeman-----324-3268
Helga Clark-----879-1807	<i>Ray Saunders</i> -----431-0297
Ron DeCamp-----253-4554	Dave Lauderbach-----878-6286
Rev Ed England-----878-3152	<i>Gene Ninnemann</i> -----426-2419
Brett Friepke-----429-7164	Sherry Matsel-----878-9707
Gary Grubb-----878-8994	Martha Parker-----886-0849
Christine Heed-----878-8510	Sue Wolaver-----427-1445