

# Gustavus Adolphus

## LUTHERAN CHURCH

1509-27<sup>th</sup> Avenue N.E.  
Minneapolis, MN 55418

612-789-7256  
info@gachurchmpls.org

*All Are Welcome Here!*

*Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church proclaims that the Gospel is God's gift to all people, to be shared unconditionally. We rejoice in the manner in which diversity has enriched, nurtured and challenged the life and ministry we share in Christ. We know that the world is often an unloving place and that the experience of alienation is all too common. Because Christ reconciles us, we welcome people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities, physical and mental abilities, educational levels, and socioeconomic backgrounds.*

*We strive to be an evermore welcoming community. Following the example of Christ, we extend a most heartfelt welcome to all.*

## PROTECTION POLICIES

### Introduction

God is love (I John 4:8) and we are called to love one another as [God] has loved us (John 13:34 & 15:12).

We pray for a day when abuse will end. Until that day, we institute policies and implement safe practices for congregation members, staff, and volunteers while simultaneously providing protection against unjust accusations. We hope the existence of screening policies prevent abuse.

Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church (GA) strives to provide a safe environment with caring and effective leaders. In an effort to promote this safe environment, the congregation commits itself to the protection policy described in this document.

### Historical Context and Oversight

In the 1980's, GA generated a few different versions of a "child protection policy." In its 100<sup>th</sup> year of celebrating God's love, 2014, the Church Council directed an update of protection policies and practices.

In 2022, the Church Council appointed the Congregational Life committee to assume the duties of the protection policy committee. This committee shall:

- Review/update this Protection Policy document annually.
- Bring recommended policy changes to the Church Council.
- Ensure there is a process in place for volunteer background checks and accurate lists.
- Ensure there is a process in place to complete and store annual permission slips.
- Refer concerns/complaints to the Church Council.
- Include information about activity in the Congregational Life Committee annual report to the congregation.

*God's Mission for GA Church: to build community where God is at the center*

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### Basic Definitions

**Bullying** – any singular or repeated unwanted, aggressive behavior. The behavior has the potential to be repeated, over time.

**Child** – an individual under 18 years of age.

**Confidentiality** – the ability to keep appropriate matters close/private/confidential is essential to ministry, and is an important aspect of implementing a protection policy. Confidentiality helps victims and their families to know they can trust those in positions of responsibility.

**Emotional/Mental Abuse** – any intentional cause of pain or distress.

**Expressions of Affection** - True expressions of affection can be a manifestation of Christ's love for all of us. A kind word of encouragement to a child or a pat on the back can be a small but significant act. An expression of affection is seen as such by both the giver and the receiver of the action. Be aware and concerned with the way your action is perceived by the other person.

**Harassment** – any singular or repeated unwanted act(s), words or gestures. Harassment can include a pattern of unwelcome behavior(s) after being notified that the action is harassing to another.

**Physical Abuse** – any non-accidental physical harm to the body.

**Sexual Abuse** – any inappropriate sexual act or threatened act.

**Vulnerable Adult** – any person, 18 years of age or older, who receives inpatient/outpatient or services from a licensed facility or homecare provider/personal care assistant. A vulnerable adult also includes those who possess a physical or mental infirmity that impairs the individual's ability to provide adequately for their own care without assistance and because of the infirmity and need for services, the individual has an impaired ability to protect the individual's self from maltreatment. However, a vulnerable adult does not include individuals who are part of an out-patient mental health, alcohol or drug, or sexual offender rehabilitation program.

### Volunteer Requirements

Volunteers working children and vulnerable adults shall:

- Be a member of the church for at least 6 months.
- Submit a background check every 3 years.

Volunteer duties falling under this category include, but are not limited to, Sunday School teachers, Confirmation volunteers, and the children sermon team.

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### Annual Parent/Guardian Permission Forms

Anyone under eighteen years of age must have parent/guardian permission to participate in any activity that takes place away from church grounds and/or is an on-site overnight event. Additionally, there must be permission on record for images captured digitally or by photograph. That permission must be in writing, using the authorized GA form, and signed and dated by a parent/guardian.

While renewed annually, permission slips will be kept on file for three years. If an incident of abuse is reported relating to an event, the permission slips for that event will be maintained indefinitely.

Forms must include:

- **Transport and/or Pick-up of Child(ren)** – a name-specific list of the adult(s) who are not parent/guardian and are authorized to pick-up and/or transport a child to-and-from GA or an outing at an off-site location.
- **One-Day Transport and/or Pick-up of Child(ren)** – a name and situation-specific list of the adults who are not parent/guardian and are authorized to pick-up and/or transport a child to-and-from GA or an outing at an off-site location.
- **Photography Release** – used to secure permission to publish images of people, including children, as well as certain property, on the GA website, in bulletins, announcements, Gazettes, brochures, and other electronic and print media pertaining to GA ministries.

### Children Online Presence

As operators of the GA website, we are responsible for the content. Before posting pictures of children 13 or younger on our website, we must have a signed parent/guardian photo release.

We will not include names and/or addresses in any on-line platform.

### Physical Space

Under no circumstances will youth or children be left in the building alone.

After an activity, check rooms to ensure that all participants have vacated the room.

During an activity involving children and/or vulnerable adults, doors should be left open or window coverings should be left open (i.e. glass on doors should not be covered).

Spaces with children and/or vulnerable adults should be supervised by at least 2 approved volunteer adults. If 2 approved adults are not available, an additional approved adult may conduct random “walk-arounds” between multiple spaces where children and/or vulnerable adults are present.

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### Response to the Reporting of Suspected Abuse

1. Upon receiving a complaint, the Church Council shall designate a staff person to engage the proper authorities and implement the policies outlined in this document.
2. The staff designee will notify the parent/guardian of all children involved in an alleged incident, unless the parents/guardians are the persons suspected of the abuse. The phone call or visit will be documented.
3. The staff designee will notify the congregation's insurance broker/carrier/agency when the reporting procedures have been initiated. The phone call or written report will be documented. If the original notice is by phone, a letter memorializing that report will also be sent to the insurance broker and/or carrier via email or USPS.
4. Only the staff designee will be the authorized person to speak for the congregation to the insurance agencies, government agencies, attorneys, news media, congregants, or others.
5. All communications within the congregation regarding the report of suspected child abuse shall attempt to protect the dignity and privacy of those persons affected by the report including the alleged child/ adult victim and the person suspected of child abuse while at the same time ensuring that persons in responsibility and law enforcement authorities remain fully informed.
6. Volunteers subjects of any investigation will be removed from their position pending completion of the investigation.
7. If found guilty in the legal system, any volunteer (i.e., staff member or volunteer) will be removed from ministry with children and/or vulnerable adults.
8. Any volunteer removed from ministry with children and/or vulnerable adults will negotiate reasonable boundaries with the designated staff person to maintain identity within the congregation and to continue to be welcomed to Word and sacrament activity.

### Child Abuse Reporting

GA staff and volunteers will follow reporting guidance from MN statute. Per Chapter 260E.06 of MN statutes on maltreatment reporting:

Subdivision 1: *Mandatory reporters.* (a) A person who knows or has reason to believe a child is being maltreated, as defined in section [260E.03](#), or has been maltreated within the preceding three years shall immediately report the information to the local welfare agency, agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report, police department, county sheriff, tribal social services agency, or tribal police department if the person is:

1. a professional or professional's delegate who is engaged in the practice of the healing arts, social services, hospital administration, psychological or psychiatric treatment, child care, education, correctional supervision, probation and correctional services, or law enforcement; or
2. employed as a member of the clergy and received the information while engaged in ministerial duties, provided that a member of the clergy is not required by this subdivision to report information that is otherwise privileged under section [595.02, subdivision 1](#), paragraph (c).

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3. (b) "Practice of social services" for the purposes of this subdivision includes but is not limited to employee assistance counseling and the provision of guardian ad litem and parenting time expeditor services.

Subd. 2 *Voluntary reporters*. Any person may voluntarily report to the local welfare agency, agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report, police department, county sheriff, tribal social services agency, or tribal police department if the person knows, has reason to believe, or suspects a child is being or has been maltreated.

### **Vulnerable Adult Abuse Reporting**

GA staff and volunteers will follow reporting guidance from MN statute. Per Chapter 626.557 of MN statutes on maltreatment reporting:

(a) A mandated reporter who has reason to believe that a vulnerable adult is being or has been maltreated, or who has knowledge that a vulnerable adult has sustained a physical injury which is not reasonably explained shall immediately report the information to the common entry point.

### **References**

#### **Definitions**

The "Bullying" definition was based on the bullying definition on the United State Government's page to eliminate bullying. See <http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/definition/index.html>

The "Child" definition was taken directly from the MN state statute, MN § 260C.007 subd. 3. Other statutes were not taken directly from the statute due to their length and our belief that the definitions provided by Jacob Wetterling Resource Center summarized the statutes well.

The definitions of the various forms of child abuse were taken from the Jacob Wetterling Resource Center. To locate the definitions and other helpful information, see <http://www.jwrc.org/VictimAssistance/ChildAbuse/tabid/265/Default.aspx>

The "Expressions of Affection" definition's examples were taken from the US Department of Health and Human Services booklet, "Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures." This booklet provided other helpful tools and discussions.

The "Harassment" definition was taken directly from the MN state statute. MN § 609.748 subd. 1(a).

The "Vulnerable Adult" definition is a summary of the Minnesota state statute defining vulnerable adult. MN § 626.5572 subd. 21.

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