

Georgetown Christian Reformed Church

Fostering Safe Community

A church safety manual | Version 2021.5.1



Fostering Safe Community

Policies and practices promoting a safe church environment.

Draft – last edited August 2021

Preamble

“Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

1 Corinthians 13:6-7

At Georgetown Church we seek to advance ministries of openness, generosity, trust, and compassion while also acting with wisdom and prudence.

This manual outlines practices to promote safety for body, mind, and soul for all people associated with our church. While we strive to provide a welcoming atmosphere for people of all backgrounds and histories, we also may need to limit the privileges of some members of our body to ensure the welcome and safety to others.

We confess and lament occurrences of physical abuse, neglect, sexual impropriety, emotional abuse, relational damage, and physical injury that have happened in and among our church family and the Church universal. We commit ourselves to pursue a community that is free from these damaging events. We yearn to be a body that champions people, policies, and practices that respect the image of God in all people, promotes healthy relationships, and builds the Kingdom of Christ on earth.

Compiled and supplemented 2019-2021 by Eric DeYoung using portions of existing policy last updated 2013.

Incorporating portions by Rev. Marc Nelesen, PhD, 2009

Adoption process:

- Initial compilation – 2019-2020
- Review and edit by church safety team – Sept, 2020 – July, 2021
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Definitions

Abuse (includes all descriptions below)

Physical Abuse: Any non-accidental human act that results in physical pain or injury to a person—whether or not it leaves a cut or wound, or a mark or bruise. Examples include but are not limited to slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, biting, choking, beating, and hitting with an object.

Physical Neglect: Not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of a person in his or her care.

Sexual Abuse: The exploitation of a person or any sexual intimacy forced on a person for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Child sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a child who is not capable of understanding sexual acts or resisting coercion such as threats or offers of gifts. Sexual abuse may not involve physical contact. Examples include but are not limited to people exposing themselves, displaying pornographic material, obscene telephone calls, and requests to engage in sexual activity.

Emotional Abuse: Attempting to control a person's life through words, threats, and fear; destroying a person's self-worth through harassment, threats, and deprivation. Emotional abuse weakens a person's mental and physical ability to resist, cuts off his or her contacts with others, and causes a gradual loss of self-esteem—all of which reinforce a sense of helplessness and dependence on the abuser.

Administrative Support Team or "Admin" Team – A team made up of the Church Administrator, Clerk of Council, Secretary of Deacons, Treasurer, and three at-large members of the congregation. This team provides oversight for the finance, facilities, technology, safety, Christian education, and personnel functions, ensuring the effectiveness of all.

Bullying – Aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Typically repeated over time.

Verbal bullying: taunting, name-calling, belittling, defamation, racial slurs, sexually abusive or suggestive remarks, malicious nicknames, extortion, abusive phone calls, gossip, or making a person the butt of jokes.

Physical bullying: hitting, punching, kicking, shoving, tripping, slapping, choking, biting, scratching, twisting limbs into painful positions, spitting, damaging clothes or property.

Relational bullying: shunning, ignoring, isolating, excluding, spreading rumors, lies or gossip to diminish the social standing of the bullied person. These actions are often accompanied by subtle gestures such as eye-rolling, sighs, frowns, sneers, snickers, and hostile body language.

Cyber bullying: Using technological tools such as e-mail, blogs, text messages, cell phones, chat rooms, social media, and so on to hurt others.

Church administrator – A staff member responsible for financial and administrative tasks. This position is referred to in some church documents as the "Financial Assistant".

Church council – The leadership group comprised of the Pastors, Elders, and Deacons.

Church leader – Any person who takes on the role of directing, organizing, facilitating, or supervising a church initiative. Church leaders serve at the direction of the council or, by proxy, the church staff. Church leaders

include all volunteer leaders, teachers, musicians, vocalists, audio/visual technicians, facilities maintenance volunteers, serve project coordinators, volunteer ministry coordinators, pastors, directors, council members, and paid staff.

Church Safety Team or “Safety Team”– A team that is charged with advancing the cause of safety and protection of everyone involved with church efforts. This team is a sub-team of the Administrative Support team and shall include one elder, one deacon, and at minimum two “at-large” members. At-large members should be invited to the team based on their knowledge and skills pertaining to safety matters (social work, law enforcement, EMT, fire protection, etc.)

Elder – A person actively occupying the office of Elder at Georgetown.

Executive Team – A team composed of the pastors, Chair of Council (elder), Vice-Chair of Council (elder), Clerk (elder), Treasurer (deacon), and Chair of Deacons.

Georgetown, Georgetown Church, Georgetown CRC, or “The Church” – Georgetown Christian Reformed Church. This shall not mean Georgetown Christian Pre-school and Learning Center nor any activity that is beyond the organizing or supervision of the church council or staff.

Church event – Any meeting, worship service, program, or class, on or off the church’s physical campus, that is initiated and directed by a church leader in connection with the ministries of Georgetown Christian Reformed Church. Events organized by church members outside of the direction of the council or staff shall not be considered church events.

Member – A person who has made profession of faith and has membership paperwork on file in the church office OR is the child of a professing member.

Ministry director – A paid staff member who is charged to lead ministry.

Participant – Any person who attends or is involved in a church ministry effort but does not have a leadership role.

Pastor – A minister of word and sacrament ordained in the Christian Reformed Church and employed by the church in a leadership role.

“Shall” or “must” – The action described is compulsory. Failure to act may result in corrective action.

“Should” – The action described is the preferred course of action and best practice. Deviation from the action described may only occur due to extenuating or unique circumstances.

Staff, staff member – Those employed part-time or full-time and paid by the church. This includes pastors, directors, administrative personnel, and facilities personnel. Sub-contractors, outside services, and 1099 contractors shall not be considered staff.

Safety policies and practices

Church Safety Team

Composition

The Church Safety Team is charged with advancing the cause of safety and security of everyone involved with church ministries. This team is a sub-team of the Administrative Support Team and includes one council member and at minimum two “at-large” members. At-large members should be invited to the team based on their knowledge and skills pertaining to safety matters (social work, law enforcement, EMT, fire protection, etc.). This team reports to the Administrative Support Team, Executive Team, and ultimately to Council.

Mandate

The Church Safety Team works to create safe environments and pursues the goals outlined in the preamble. It shall proactively consider infrastructure, tools, policies, and strategies that advance the cause of safety and the health of the church community.

Tasks

- The team stays informed about risks in the community and considers appropriate ways to confront them in the church context.
- The team works with the church staff to adopt, review, revise, and encourage compliance with the church safety manual.
- The team takes a leadership role in reporting and responding to incidents at church events, including allegations of abuse, reports of impropriety, and medical emergencies. The team works to resolve the situations in a timely manner.
- The team remains in regular communication with the Church Administrator and staff to discuss matters of church safety and to consider updates to infrastructure, policies, and practices.
- The team shall work with the Administrative Assistant to administer church leader screening and Sunday morning protocols.
- The team partners with the staff and other church leaders to educate the congregation, especially those most at risk, about matters of safety.
- The team may choose to handle many matters via electronic communication but must use care to preserve important documents and protect privacy.
- The frequency and duration of team meetings is at the discretion of the team.

Building infrastructure, security, and access

First Aid Equipment and safety resources

The church safety team works with the staff to provide appropriate first aid equipment and supplies easily accessible in case of emergency.

Such resources may include:

- Emergency Instructions and Information – a printed emergency response sheet providing instructions in the event of a medical or other safety incident. This resource provides public safety phone numbers, the address of the church, as well as contact information for key Georgetown staff and volunteers.
- Keys and/or access cards and controls

- First Aid Cabinet – a clearly marked first aid cabinet will be periodically inspected and maintained. A break away security zip tie will be placed on the cabinet to indicate cabinet is fully stocked. A broken tie indicates the cabinet was accessed and is in need of inspection and restocking.
- AED – public access to an automated external defibrillator on campus.
- NARCAN and/or other emergency health treatments
- Telephones – In addition to encouraging volunteers to carry cell phones, standard phones should be stationed in easily accessible areas.
- First Aid Events Bag – portable First Aid events bags will be maintained and used for off campus activities. The availability of this bag should be communicated to volunteers.
- Lanyards – specially designated lanyards (i.e. color) will be provided to on duty Safeguard members (see below).

Fire protection and response

The Church Safety Team will work with church leaders to ensure fire protection systems on the church campus are effective and up to standards. These systems include smoke detectors, alarms, sprinklers, fire extinguishers, and other related systems.

Should a person notice smoke or fire, they are to dial 911 immediately.

Access control

The staff and Safety Team will periodically review building access and security systems. The team will review the security of doors and windows, locks and keying systems, emergency exits, signage, and other matters pertaining to safe entrance and exit. The team will work with facilities leaders to ensure good practices related to locking and securing the campus.

Sunday morning protocols

Sunday mornings are an especially active time in the life of the church. Worship, childcare, children’s ministries, youth ministries, adult programs, and meetings take place during this time. For this reason, the following measures are implemented for the safety of all.

Access control

Soon after the commencement of Sunday morning worship, all doors shall be locked.

Designated Elder

One elder is assigned the role of “Designated Elder” each week and has special duties on Sunday mornings.

The Designated Elder is the primary contact for facility security and is assisted by the Safeguard (see below).

The Designated Elder takes on the following tasks:

- Wears an orange lanyard with a name tag (obtained at the completion of safety orientation).
- Carries a cell phone with important numbers programmed.
- Greets in the Gathering Area prior to the service.
- Monitors congregational needs during the service.
- Performs a building walk-through shortly after service begins and checks Childcare Center several times during the service.
- Sits in the Gathering Area to monitor traffic to various areas.
- Greets at an exit following the service.
- Facilitates responses to medical needs.
- Helps any persons that may need special assistance.

Safeguard

Safeguards are appointed by the staff or Church Safety Team and monitor the facility and grounds to ensure the safety and well-being of those on Georgetown's campus. The Safeguard's primary work is about availability and monitoring during church events to promote security, child safety, and to be a resource during emergencies or potential emergencies. The Safeguard takes on the following tasks:

- Wears an orange lanyard with a name tag (obtained at the completion of safety orientation).
- Carries a cell phone with key numbers programmed.
- Monitors the facility with the Designated Elder during the worship service (see above). Either the Designated Elder or the Safeguard should remain in the Gathering Area during the duration of the worship service.
- Monitors the campus until the conclusion of all Sunday morning church programs. Monitoring the building should include a walkthrough of classrooms, bathrooms, the Courtyard, Activities Center, stairwells, the Childcare Center, and the parking lot.
- Directs youth found in hallways back to their class or their parents.
- Helps any persons that may need special assistance.
- Immediately reports urgent or suspicious concerns to the appropriate staff member.
- If a significant incident arises, the Safeguard shall complete an [Incident Report Form](#) (Appendix F) as soon as possible, preferably within 2 hours of the event, and shall notify a pastor or the appropriate staff member.

Violence or threats of violence

"Active shooter" scenarios have been a cause for concern for public gatherings. The safety team should consider and pursue best practices for equipping the facility and educating church leaders and participants.

Any church leader or participant encountering a threat to the church or participants should take appropriate measures to address the threat and also complete and submit an [Incident Report Form](#) (Appendix F).

The Safety team advises these responses to the following situations:

Active shooter/Armed Threat

- **Call 911** when it is safe to do so.
- **Evacuate:** If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Be sure to:
 - Have an escape route and plan in mind.
 - Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow.
 - Leave your belongings behind.
 - Help others escape, if possible.
 - Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be.
 - Keep your hands visible.
 - Follow the instructions of any police officers.
 - Do not attempt to move wounded people.
 - Call 911 when you are safe.
- **Hide out:** If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.
 - Your hiding place should:
 - Be out of the active shooter's view.
 - Should provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office with a closed and locked door),

- Should not trap you or restrict your options for movement.
 - To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place:
 - Lock the door.
 - Blockade the door with heavy furniture.
 - If the active shooter is nearby:
 - Lock the door.
 - Silence your cell phone and/or pager.
 - Turn off any source of noise (i.e., radios, televisions).
 - Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks).
 - Remain quiet.
 - If evacuation and hiding out are not possible:
 - Remain calm.
 - Dial 911, if possible, to alert police to the active shooter's location.
 - If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen.
- **Take action against the active shooter:** As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by:
 - Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her.
 - Throwing items and improvising weapons.
 - Yelling.
 - Committing to your actions.

When law enforcement arrives:

- Remain calm and follow officers' instructions.
- Put down any items in your hands (i.e., bags, jackets).
- Immediately raise hands and spread fingers.
- Keep hands visible at all times.
- Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as holding on to them for safety.
- Avoid pointing, screaming, and/or yelling.
- Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises.

Bomb threat

Because it is hard to determine whether a telephone, verbal or written threat is credible, all threats must be taken seriously and properly addressed.

- Do not activate the fire alarm.
- Upon notification a threat has been received; tell the congregation that a problem has come to the attention of the safety/security team and that they have determined that evacuation of the building is necessary.
- Tell the congregation that a bomb threat has been received, that we do not know how credible the threat is, but we are evacuating for safety.
- Tell the congregation that if they discover a bomb or suspicious object, do not touch, move, or jar the object. The object should be reported to a safety/security team member.
- Evacuate the building in an orderly manner.
- Request that cell phone use be avoided until in the assembly / reunification area to the south of the church building in the parking lot.
- Tell congregants that further information will be given once at the assembly / reunification area.
- Tell congregants they should not re-enter the building until given further instructions.

Weather policies

Tornado

If a tornado warning or watch is in effect for Ottawa County one hour before a regularly scheduled church event it shall be cancelled. Cancellations will be announced via email and appropriate media outlets.

In the case of severe weather that does not rise to the level of a tornado warning or watch, church leaders should still monitor the weather and use discretion as to whether a church event shall be cancelled or ended prematurely.

When potential for severe weather exists during a Sunday morning worship service, the Designated Elder and Safeguard should monitor weather reports for changing conditions. If a tornado warning arises in Ottawa County during a church event, the event shall be ended immediately, and participants shall be given the option of returning to their homes or taking refuge in the lower level of the church. The preferred shelter during the threat of a tornado is the lower level of the “new addition” (southeast corner of the church building).

Tornado Warning during a Sunday morning

Should a Tornado warning come into effect on a Sunday morning, attendees will be directed to designated shelters located in the lower levels as follows:

The pastor will instruct the congregation to evacuate the sanctuary to seek shelter in the designated shelter areas with the following instructions:

- We are under a tornado warning. We are ending our event.
- Children are already in the process of seeking shelter in the lower level, Parents should meet them there.
- Do not leave the building. Seek shelter in lower levels. SafeGuard members will meet you in the Gathering Area and guide you to the shelter areas.
- You will be advised when the “All Clear” is given.
- Please begin evacuation now.

Childcare Center - With the assistance of SafeGuard members and any parents that arrive, the Childcare Center staff will relocate the children to lower level in designated shelter areas.

Classrooms - The teacher or leader will relocate the class quickly and calmly to a designated shelter area in the lower level.

SafeGuards will monitor the weather condition and communicate to building users when it is safe to exit the lower level.

Winter Weather

In the case of severe winter weather all church programs shall be canceled for a given day if Hudsonville Public Schools have cancelled that day due to inclement weather.

Even if there is no school closing, church events should also be cancelled if the weather conditions are judged to be too severe or roads are not safe for travel. This decision shall be made by church staff.

Staff should aim to cancel church events no later than 3 hours before an event is scheduled to begin.

Winter weather cancellations shall be announced via email and appropriate media outlets.

Church events *may* proceed in conditions of severe winter weather if all the following conditions are met:

1. A church leader desires to proceed with the church event.
2. No children are involved in the event.
3. A church leader notifies participants that they would like to proceed with the event despite the presence of the severe weather, reminding participants that in this situation the event would typically be cancelled.
4. Participants are informed that attendance is not mandatory, and they should feel no undue pressure to attend if they have concerns about safety.

Staff hiring and screening

Before any new staff member is hired, the search team or team in charge of the hiring process shall verify the safety and suitability of the new hire. This verification might include obtaining an application, interviewing, performing a criminal record check, verifying references, or fingerprinting.

New staff members shall also complete the church leader screening process described below.

New staff hires shall also become familiar with the church safety manual, receive orientation about medical and safety resources, and sign the church leader [Code of Ethics](#).

Church leader screening

All potential church leaders 15 years of age or older must apply and undergo screening before they may assume leadership duties. Children 14 years old or younger do not require screening but must be supervised by a screened Church leader while they perform any leadership role. Applicants have the right to withdraw from the application process at any time. The Church Safety Team may be consulted for further review of any applicant, as necessary. All applicants shall be furnished with a copy of the [Code of Ethics](#) (Appendix C) and Position Summary for their role ([Appendices G-X](#)). Forms may be completed online to satisfy the requirements.

Screening for members

[Appendix D](#) serves as a guide for this process

1. Complete and submit a Church Leader Application Form ([Appendix A](#)) (Applicants under 18 years of age should complete the Minor Church Leader Application Form ([Appendix B](#))).
2. Sign and submit the [Church Leader Code of Ethics](#) ([Appendix C](#)).
3. Be cleared through the Michigan State Police (ICHAT) system.

Screening for non-members

[Appendix E](#) serves as a guide for this process

1. Fully complete and submit a Church Leader Application Form ([Appendix A](#)) (Applicants under 18 years of age should complete the Minor Church Leader Application Form ([Appendix B](#))).
2. Sign and submit the [Church Leader Code of Ethics](#) ([Appendix C](#))
3. Be cleared through the Michigan State Police (ICHAT) system
4. Obtain a letter of recommendation from an existing Church Leader at Georgetown. This recommendation may involve contacting the applicant's previous church/organization.
5. Obtain approval from the Executive Team.

On-going screening procedures

1. Annually staff members shall compile a list of all volunteer leaders associated with their ministries.
2. The volunteer lists shall be submitted to the Administrative Assistant who will verify the application form, [Code of Ethics](#), and a recent ICHAT clearance (within 3 years) are on file.

3. If an application form, [Code of Ethics](#), or Letter of Recommendation is missing, the Administrative Assistant shall notify the appropriate staff member who will help obtain the missing item from the volunteer leader.
4. If a recent ICHAT clearance is missing, the Church Administrator will run a new ICHAT check for the volunteer if an Application Form is on file.
5. Should the Church Administrator encounter a “flag”, they should report the nature of the offense to a Pastor and the Executive Team. Together they should determine a course of action based on the nature of the flag and the elapsed time since the offense.

File security

To the extent permissible by law, the Church Administrator should keep all records, applications, and information about individual applicants confidential.

Education

The staff and other church leaders should partner with the Church Safety Team to give safety information to our church.

Youth and children should receive age-appropriate information about abuse and prevention. This information should include how they can protect themselves, what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior for both them and for church leaders, and with whom they can consult for help. Parents should be encouraged to attend informational meetings aimed at children and youth.

All new staff and leaders (including council) should receive basic safety orientation before they assume their duties, or as soon as reasonably possible. This training should include all matters of church safety, but especially the signs and symptoms of child abuse, abuse awareness, procedures for reporting suspected child abuse, and the dynamics of abuse. This training should also include what constitutes inappropriate behavior and the differences between abuse and inappropriate behavior. Existing church leaders should receive periodic continuing education on these topics.

Designated Elders and Safeguards should receive appropriate orientation, reviewing all information and equipment necessary to perform their tasks.

Privacy protection

The church should take measures to protect the privacy of church members. This is especially important for children, those who are vulnerable due to family dynamics, and those who are serving as overseas partners.

Technology and social media

Church leaders must use care and wisdom when using communication technology and social media.

While the use of digital media is becoming commonplace, it is important, as a representative of Georgetown Christian Reformed Church, leaders conduct themselves in an appropriate manner to avoid any unintended situations that could adversely affect their standing. These guidelines are not intended to restrict participation but rather to provide guidance if leaders choose to engage in online activities.

Personal Digital Media Usage Guidelines

- Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time and could be taken out of context. Protect your privacy. The lines between public and private, personal and professional, are blurred in the digital world. You are always a Georgetown CRC leader.

- Reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face in your online behavior.
- Represent Georgetown CRC, students, and parents in the best light.
- Use care when providing access or "friending" students on a personal site or account.
- Before posting personal digital media, give thought to how the images reflect your leadership role. Postings relating to alcohol, tobacco, etc. may be deemed inappropriate.

No communications of sexual nature, sexting, harassment, threats, obscenities, or intimidation will be tolerated.

Transportation policies

- Transportation before and after events to and from church should be done by parents or their appointed person whenever possible.
- Two adults should be present and seated in the front seat when transporting youth. If this is not possible, at least two youth should be present in the vehicle.
- When transportation on a one-on-one basis is unavoidable, parents should give prior consent. If parental consent is not given in advance, no youth should be alone with a leader in their car.
- Drivers should have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance for their vehicle. They should also agree to obey all traffic laws while transporting youth.
- Youth under the age of twelve should sit in the rear seat. Booster seats should be used when required by state law. All youth should wear seat belts regardless of where they are seated in the vehicle.
- Drivers should not transport more youths than available seat belts.

Ministry specific policies

Worship

Should a person attending a worship service need medical assistance the Designated Elder, Safeguard, or another assisting member is to dial 911, request and coordinate medical assistance.

If it can be accomplished safely, the patient is to be moved to the Gathering Area to minimize disruption, provide for the privacy of the patient, allow emergency medical personnel access to treat and if necessary, prepare the patient for transport to a medical facility.

Childcare

- The Childcare Center generally serves children from birth to age three.
- All caregivers over 14-years-old are considered church leaders and must be screened as such.
- The Childcare Center must be staffed by, at minimum, two caregivers. Both Caregivers must be 14 or older, and at least one of the Caregivers must be 18 years or older.
- Even if there is only one child present, two caregivers should remain to ensure that no child is left in the care of one individual.
- Members of the same immediate family may not be the only caregivers present in the Childcare Center. At least one other caregiver should also be in attendance.
- Only assigned caregivers or pre-approved substitutes can serve in the Childcare Center. A person who is not scheduled to serve as a caregiver for that service may not spend time in the Childcare Center during or after the service unless substituting or directed by the appropriate staff member.
- Safety policies pertaining to childcare should be posted in the Childcare Center and should be available in the church office.
- A greeter should check off each caregiver's name on the sign-in sheet located in the Childcare Center or write in their name if they are a substitute.

- Greeters should assist parents with signing in their children at the greeting table. They should list any specific instructions on the sign-in sheet. Nametags are clipped to the child's clothing and any belongings placed in their designated slot. Parents should receive a pager with the number assigned to their child for that service.
- All diaper changing should be done in plain view utilizing the facilities provided in the Childcare Center.
- Children should always use the bathrooms provided within the childcare center and do so with the door ajar. Children should not be allowed to leave the Childcare Center to use any other bathroom or to go to another room within the church building.
- Caregivers should arrive fifteen minutes prior to the service and should remain until the parents have picked up their children after the service.
- Any caregiver violating the policy should be reported to the appropriate staff member as soon as reasonably possible.
- The [discipline policy](#) applies to Childcare Programs.

Children's ministries

- Children's Ministries serves young people from ages 3 to grade 5.
- Orientation and training for leaders should be completed annually to review the church safety manual and [Code of Ethics](#), highlighting portions of special importance to the children's programs.
- Policies concerning children's ministries shall be posted in areas in where children's ministries meet.
- All teachers, counselors, aides, and assistants helping with children's ministry events, even in a substitute capacity, are considered church leaders and must be screened as such.
- Only one adult member of a family should serve in a classroom at a given time. A couple (husband and wife) should not serve together in one classroom unless accompanied by a third leader or with prior approval.
- Leaders should keep records of children's attendance as well as an attendance record of the leaders and helpers who serve in the program. The appropriate staff member should be informed when a substitute takes the place of an assigned leader or helper. Leaders should obtain contact information of children who attend for the first time.
- Safeguards shall monitor classrooms and the surrounding hallways during the worship services. They should observe through the windows, but not enter the room unless an issue arises.
- Parents should be encouraged to have their child use the bathroom before arrival at any children's ministry event.
- Children who need to use the bathroom should use the bathrooms closest to their classroom. The leader should be aware of children leaving the classroom for bathroom use and monitor the time and frequency of such use.
- Children who attend Children's Worship should only use the bathroom provided in the room and the door should be kept ajar.
- Church leaders shall not have one-on-one, private contact with children. All interactions must be in a group or public setting. If a semi-private setting is necessary, two unrelated adults must be present.
- Any church leader violating the policy should be reported to a staff member, pastor, or a member of the Church Safety Team.
- The [discipline policy](#) applies to all children's ministries.
- While the appropriate display of affection between leaders and participants is often part of conveying support and encouragement, such displays can be misinterpreted. For that reason, displays of affection should be limited, simple, and casual. A leader's or participant's right to refuse any physical display of affection will be respected.

- Participants in the program should not arrive more than ten minutes before the start of activities, nor should they stay longer than ten minutes after activities.
- Children’s ministry shall not hold a retreat or overnight activity without the participation of a parent-appointed, same-sex mentor present for each student. Children’s ministry should consult with the Church Safety Team before sponsoring any unique overnight or long-term retreats or service projects.

Youth ministries

- Youth ministries involves young people from grades 5 to 12.
- Orientation and training for leaders should be completed annually and include information about church safety. The team should review the Church safety manual and [Code of Ethics](#), highlighting portions of special importance to the youth programs.
- All youth ministry leaders, teachers, and helpers are church leaders and must complete the screening procedures outlined above before they can serve.
- Youth ministries shall regularly address matters of safety with participants. In age-appropriate ways leaders should discuss matters pertaining to bullying, appropriate and inappropriate behavior, abuse prevention, hurt awareness, abuse reporting, and intervention strategies.
- All activities for youth ministries should be supervised by at least two leaders and enough leaders should be present to provide adequate supervision of all participants.
- Attendance should be taken at the beginning of each event. Students who are first time attendees should provide parent contact information.
- Leaders should maintain a list or database containing parent contact information for all attendees.
- Participants in the program should not arrive more than ten minutes before the start of activities, nor should they stay longer than ten minutes after activities.
- The [discipline policy](#) applies to youth ministry programs.
- Youth/Leader Contact:
 - Whenever possible, one-on-one interactions between leaders and youth should be of the same gender.
 - One-on-one meetings should be held in public places.
 - Leaders should avoid sitting and talking in stationary vehicles with youth.
 - When meeting in a youth’s home, leaders must be sure a parent or another adult is home, or knows about the visit.
 - Parents must be notified of one-on-one and small group meetings that are not scheduled as a church event, (a voicemail, e-mail, or text message is adequate). When this is not possible, the leader should notify the appropriate church staff to inform them of the time and place of the meeting.
- While the appropriate display of affection between leaders and participants is often part of conveying support and encouragement, such displays can be misinterpreted. For that reason, displays of affection should be limited, simple, and casual. A leader’s or participant’s right to refuse any physical display of affection will be respected.
- Retreats and overnight activities:
 - Separate sleeping areas for males and females will be provided at all overnight events. At least one adult, preferable two adults, will be designated to the areas and will be present for the entire overnight event. Male and female adults must be present for all coed overnights.
 - Properly chaperoned common area may be available.

- Leaders should make every effort to be present in all sleeping areas so that no area is left unsupervised during the night.

Going Public

- Due to the unique nature of the Going Public program, Faith Friends are considered a special type of mentor. Faith Friends shall not be considered Church Leaders for screening purposes but shall meet the following criteria:
 - Must be the same gender as the student.
 - Must receive endorsement from the student's parents regarding the Faith Friend's participation.
 - The Faith Friend must complete a [Code of Ethics](#) form.
 - The Faith Friends and Student must always meet with the knowledge and approval of parents and should avoid isolated one-on-one situations.

Friendship ministries

- Friendship ministries shall identify several "key leaders" who will provide organizational and supervisory leadership for the ministry. The names of these key leaders shall be communicated to the church staff.
- The key leaders for this ministry are Church Leaders and must be screened as such.
- The key leaders might also recruit and welcome "supporting leaders" to help in their work. These supporting leaders need not be screened but are under the mentorship and supervision of the key leaders.
- Friendship ministries key leaders should consult *Preventing Child Abuse: Creating a Safe Place, Fourth Edition*. Beth A. Swagman, Faith Alive Resources – Appendix G, Guidelines for Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Friendship Ministries Programs and adopt best practices from the guidelines outlined.

Service ministries

By their nature, service initiatives involve more risk than other programs. While we are called to step out boldly to advance the Kingdom and serve people, we also must adopt good practices to promote safety.

Feeding America

- Feeding America volunteers shall not be considered Church Leaders for the screening purposes, however each volunteer should:
 - Remain in public, commonly viewable areas whenever possible.
 - Make a church leader aware if a private or semi-private conversation with a client needed.

Guatemala

- Due to the diversity of the teams, participants shall not be considered Church Leaders for screening purposes, but do have the following special requirements:
 - All participants must have completed the 8th grade.
 - All participants must complete a trip specific application form.
 - All participants must complete a [Code of Ethics](#) form.
 - The trip leader will submit a list of all participants to the administrative assistant along with a "just in case" file which includes a copy of team member's applications, emergency contact information, and travel insurance information.

Lake City Helping Hands

- All leaders must have completed the screening process **or** satisfy the following criteria:
 - Be a parent or sibling of a trip participant.

- Complete the [Code of Ethics](#) form.

Responses

Physical injury among youth

In the event of physical distress or injury, leaders must pay attention and act. The following guidelines address what to do in case of an incident.

Level 1 – No significant distress or evidence of serious damage. Student wishes to continue to participate.

- Provide appropriate first aid/treatment: bandage, ice, etc.
- Provide pressure-free space and time for the student to settle and recover.
- Check in with student's condition after the incident.
- No parent report or incident report needed.

Level 2 – Significant distress. Uncertainty about level of care needed. Student does not want to continue to participate OR church leaders judge situation needs further attention.

- Provide first aid.
- Report to appropriate staff member.
- Call parent as soon as possible.
- Follow instructions of parent.
- Staff member records notes on the [incident report form](#) and submits to church administrator.
- Staff member follows up with parent on the condition of child.

Level 3 – Emergency situation

- Call 911.
- Provide necessary first aid.
- Seek doctor or nurse in the building.
- Call parent immediately.
- Notify appropriate staff member.
- A church leader should stay with a minor until a family member is present.
- Staff members and other church leaders compose an [incident report](#) and submit to church administrator.
- Staff follows up with parents to ensure proper care was provided.

Health emergency

Should a health emergency arise during a church event, the following steps should be taken.

- One person, usually a key staff member, Designated Elder or Safeguard, should take charge and coordinate the response.
- Church members with medical or first responder training should be summoned.
- Call 911.
- One person should be assigned to “flagging down” emergency responders and help them locate the person needing care.
- An [incident form](#) should be completed and submitted to the church administrator.
- The person needing care should be transported to the Gathering Area or other more private area if the situation allows.

Bullying/Social injury among youth

Bullying has no place in a loving church community. Leaders must be vigilant and address bullying promptly. Below are guidelines on how to address different incidents.

Level 1 – Harsh words or horseplay, not judged to be abusive.

- Leader takes student aside and addresses the behavior.
- Leader monitors situation to ensure behavior is not continuing.
- Leaders move the student(s) involved toward truth and reconciliation, prompting apologies and restitution where necessary.
- No report needed.

Level 2 – Repeated or intentional harsh words including insensitive or exclusionary comments regarding family, school, sexuality, or race. Repeated unwanted physical contact. Harsh physical contact.

- Defuse the situation
- Pull the instigating student aside to address and correct behavior in a constructive way.
- Pull the affected student aside to check on them.
- Report to appropriate staff member.
- Staff and church leaders address behavior directly with student.
- Parent contacted after event to address the situation.
- Leaders move the student(s) involved toward truth and reconciliation, prompting apologies and restitution where necessary.
- Staff takes notes on incident and works with pastors to decide how to best help those impacted by the incident.

Level 3 – Extreme physical contact (hitting, kicking, biting). Verbal abuse. Threats.

- Take necessary steps to defuse the situation.
- Remove student from group setting.
- Report to appropriate staff member.
- Parents contacted immediately.
- Staff member completes a report using the [incident form](#) and submits to a pastor and church administrator.
- Staff member consults with pastors to decide how to best help those impacted by the incident.
- Leaders move the student(s) involved toward truth and reconciliation, prompting apologies and restitution where necessary.
- Staff member and relevant church leaders evaluate the student's continued participation. Consider options for alternate student and family support.

Discipline

- Corporal punishment and abusive verbal discipline are prohibited.
- The leader is encouraged to pray with the child for guidance and correction of the problem.
- Parents should be informed and consulted if a behavioral problem continues or cannot be corrected with minor intervention. The appropriate staff member should also be informed and consulted for an appropriate response to the problem.
- Leaders should ask for the help of other adults before the situation escalates to “losing their cool”. If a pattern of behavior continues, an aide or parent should attend to help with the situation.
- Expectations for a child's behavior should reflect their age and maturity level. Discipline should also be age and maturity appropriate. Children should be reminded of what is considered acceptable behavior during the program/event they are attending.

- Appropriate forms of discipline should be reviewed with leaders prior to the beginning of each event, program, or activity. “Time outs” should not last longer than the child’s age, and the child should not be isolated from supervision or put in the sole care of an adult during any form of discipline.

Addressing hurt

Concerns about abuse *outside* of church context

(For situations related to church activities, see the [following section, Reporting Abuse.](#))

Should any church leader have evidence of a child being abused they must report the situation to Child Protective Services and/or Police immediately.

Certain persons (including teachers and clergy) have legal responsibilities as “mandated reporters” to report suspicions of abuse. See the state mandated reporters guide in the [additional resources section](#).

Should church leaders or participants *suspect* incidence of abuse happening outside of the church context they should report their concerns to one of the pastors, staff members, or a member of the Church Safety Team. The team should consult chapter 6 of *Preventing Child Abuse: Creating a Safe Place, Fourth Edition*. Beth A. Swagman, *Faith Alive Resources* and proceed as recommended.

Church leaders should acquaint themselves with the warning signs of abuse and respond appropriately.

Recognizing signs and symptoms of abuse is not a simple matter. Children rarely exhibit just one sign that suggests they have been victims of abuse. And some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes or the aftereffects of traumas other than abuse in a child's life. Conversely, it's possible for abuse to be taking place without the *appearance* of noticeable symptoms because children have the ability to mask or deny something in their lives that would otherwise be very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, when you observe several signs over a period of time, it may suggest that a child is suffering from abuse. The complexity of this process of observation highlights the need for training among volunteers, staff, and program leaders.

Here are some typical signs and symptoms that may alert you to be attentive to the possibility of abuse or neglect:

Infants and Preschool Children

- Regression to an earlier stage of behavioral development such as baby talk, thumb sucking, or bedwetting.
- Change in social behavior - excessive crying or clinging, becoming aggressive or withdrawn - that is not associated with normal developmental stages.
- Physical manifestations such as loss of bowel control, bedwetting, frequent urination, headaches, stomachaches, breathing difficulties, sore throats accompanied by gagging, or stains in the child’s underclothes.
- Exhibiting signs of fear around a family member or a familiar person; fear of a familiar place or object.
- Fear of being touched, shying away from physical contact; resistance to being diapered or assisted in the bathroom.
- Use of explicit language or sexual behavior that is beyond the child's comprehension or life experience.
- Attempting sexual behavior with other children or attending adults.

- Unexplained injuries and/or bruises, repeated injuries blamed on the adults carelessness, multiple bruises sustained in one event, or bruises to child's midsection, back, head, or back of thighs; signs of scalding, burning, or distinctive bruising, such as the shape of a belt buckle; multiple bruises in various stages of healing.
- Name-calling or bullying behavior toward other children, sulking, or brooding.
- Fascination with fire, playing with matches and lighters.

School-Age Children

- Physical manifestations as above, with addition of complaints of pain.
- Irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom.
- Smearing feces on walls or objects.
- Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck; failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort.
- Unusual fears - a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences.
- Poor concentration in classroom.
- Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviors, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing.
- Engaging in self-injury; engaging in excessive masturbation or masturbation in public setting.
- Acting enraged and out of control; expressing anger through destruction.
- Shyness about physical touch.
- Exhibiting sexual behavior beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in a sexual manner with other children or adults.
- Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations or bullying others.
- Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, or violent disruptions.
- Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, or assaulting.
- Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events either because of being punished or to hide bruises.
- Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism.
- Hyper-vigilance - excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled.
- Preoccupation with fire and setting fires.

Adolescents

- Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight.
- Change in sleep patterns, including excessive sleeping, sleeping during the day, and insomnia.
- Plunge in school performance.
- Perfectionist behavior, excessive self-criticism, attempting to please adults, overreacting to any form of criticism or complaint.
- Sexually provocative or asexual behavior, denial of body changes and sexual development; for females, seeking affection from older adult males.
- Experimentation with drugs and alcohol.
- Self-abusive behavior including cutting self, preoccupation with danger and weapons, or suicide attempts.
- Truancy from school.
- Cruelty to animals, bullying younger children.
- Emotional numbness, inability to be emotionally supportive to others.
- Having few friends, changing friends often.

- Depression and other signs of withdrawal and avoidance.
- Pregnancy.
- Refusing to attend to basic hygiene.
- Rectal and vaginal infections.
- Hyper-vigilance - excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled.

Signs of Neglect

- Appearing to be underfed, constantly hungry, or underweight for size and age.
- Begging for food, stealing food, or hoarding food.
- Lack of supervision, underage child supervising another child/other children.
- Chronic absenteeism from school, unattended educational needs.
- Unattended medical or dental needs.
- Consistent or frequent lack of hygiene, poor hygiene, or lack of cleanliness resulting in odors.
- For infants, failure to thrive.

Parental Behaviors and Home Life

- Not attending meetings about the child, not showing an interest in the child, critical of child, or uncomplimentary.
- Constantly putting child down, using harsh words to describe child, or using threats and unflattering language.
- Describing child as underachiever, complaining that he/she lets people down, is unmotivated, achieves less than brothers and sisters.
- Speaking of child in way that sounds romantic, too grown-up, too sugary, or too perfect.
- Hostile, closed-minded, overprotective, isolating, doesn't let others in the house, won't participate in activities with other parents, makes excuses about failing to do tasks, or talks about things not being good at home.
- Reports of past/other suspicious behavior, or reports that an older brother or sister may have been mistreated.
- Chemical dependency by one or both parents.
- Sudden and dramatic changes in family's financial security.

Concern about self-harm, suicide, or threats to others

Church leaders should be vigilant for signs that individuals are struggling with mental and emotional health.

If someone is showing one or more of the following behaviors, he or she may be thinking about suicide. Don't ignore these warning signs. Get help immediately.

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself.
- Looking for a way to kill oneself.
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

If you or someone you know needs help, call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Trained crisis workers are available to talk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you think someone is in immediate danger, do not leave him or her alone—stay there and call 911.

Church leaders should also report to one of the pastors, staff members, or a member of the Church Safety Team concerns about a person harming themselves or others. See additional resources for more information about suicide, self-injury, and violence.

Reporting Abuse within the Church Context

All Church leaders are required to report any suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse. The report should be made to one of the pastors, staff members, or a member of the Church Safety Team. The reporting person should fill out an [Incident Report](#) form providing as many details as accurately as possible, including the time(s), location(s), and nature of the incident. The reporting person shall also report the incident to Child Protective Services and/or local law enforcement authorities on their own. If a pastor does not initially receive the report, the church leader should also report the incident to a pastor as soon as reasonably possible. The applicable staff member in that ministry area should also be notified.

The church council requires the ordained pastors to report any suspected or alleged incidents of abuse involving minor children to Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement authorities. This should occur within forty-eight (48) hours.

All reported cases of suspected or alleged child abuse against a church leader should be handled in accordance with the abuse response protocols described in the following section. These procedures and guidelines have been approved by council and should be kept available in the church office.

All non-child abuse incidents that result from inappropriate behavior or questionable circumstances should also be reported. This includes (but is not limited to) minor-to-minor interaction and adult-to-minor interaction. Any person with first-hand knowledge should notify the appropriate staff member about the incident immediately so the situation can be addressed. The staff member should notify the church administrator as soon as reasonably possible after the incident. The reporting person and/or staff member should fill out an [Incident Report](#) form. The church administrator should take appropriate action(s) to resolve the situation. This may include the advice and approval of council based upon the circumstances surrounding the incident and recommended resolution.

The church administrator should keep records of all reported incidents. The records should be kept secure and confidential. The church administrator, with permission granted by the Executive Team, may grant access to the reports by a church-appointed attorney or insurance carrier representing the church.

Responding to Abuse Allegations

Allegations of potentially illegal emotional abuse, physical abuse and neglect, and sexual abuse against a church leader, staff member, volunteer or other church member towards a minor child should be reported to an appropriate agency outside the church, such as Child Protective Services and/or the local law enforcement authorities. The appropriate authorities are those who have jurisdiction in the location where the alleged abuse took place, regardless of where the alleged victim or alleged abuser lives at the time the allegations are brought forward.

A person who receives allegations of child abuse against a church leader and concludes that the allegations create a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred should report the matter to local law enforcement authorities and/or Child Protective Services within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving the information.

In addition, a person who has knowledge of circumstances that create a reasonable suspicion that a church leader has committed child abuse also should report the matter to local law enforcement authorities and/or Child Protective Services within twenty-four hours of formulating that conclusion.

In most cases, the identity of the person making the initial report will not be revealed without consent unless required for the purpose of a court hearing. Therefore, the person with first-hand information about the report should describe the allegations of the abuse and/or the circumstances supporting the allegations. In addition, the person reporting the matter should inform whether the alleged abuse occurred in the church facility, and/or in connection with a church-sponsored program. The reporting person should also fill out an [Incident Report](#) as soon as reasonably possible.

The person receiving the report should contact the pastor and chairperson of council (if the minor has not implicated them) who should then contact the church's legal counsel and the church's insurance agent (if applicable).

If the alleged victim and alleged abuser are not members of the same church, each church should appoint a council member who together should maintain contact about the progress of the investigation.

Church officials (hereafter council) may conduct their own investigation after civil authorities have begun theirs. However, council should not reveal the nature of the allegations or question the alleged offender until after the civil authorities have met with him/her. Council should appoint a council member to report on the progress and status of the allegation.

If the alleged abuser admits wrongdoing against the victim at any stage of this process, the admission of guilt should be brought to the attention of the council. The council should deliberate and determine the outcomes according to established church council policy and procedures as established by Synod.

When the appointed council member determines that either (i) the authorities have concluded that the allegations merit serious investigation, or (ii) there is the possibility of formal charges, the appointed member should notify the council.

1. The appointed member should present the council with a written document specifying the nature of the allegations and information known at that point.
2. The council should give the accused an opportunity to confront and respond to the allegations.
3. In light of the information presented, the council should implement one or more of the following actions:
 - a. supervise contact at church between the accused and minors;
 - b. prohibit contact at church between the accused and the accuser or any minor in the congregation;
 - c. suspend the accused from office, position, or duty with or without pay (when applicable) without prejudice pending the outcome of the investigation.

If and when the appointed member learns that authorities have filed criminal charges against the accused, then the appointed member should report this information to council.

1. The appointed member should present the council with a written document specifying the nature of the allegations and information known at that point.

2. The council should give the accused an opportunity to confront and respond to the allegations.
3. In light of the information presented, the council should implement one or more of the following actions:
 - a. supervise contact at church between the accused and minors;
 - b. prohibit contact at church between the accused and the accuser or any minor in the congregation;
 - c. suspend the accused from office, position, or duty with or without pay (when applicable) without prejudice pending the outcome of the charges filed.

When the criminal proceedings have concluded, the council should promptly revisit the matter, whether the result is conviction, acquittal, or dropped charges. If the criminal charges are dropped or prosecution does not result in conviction, the council should decide whether or not to rescind its earlier action and/or take additional action.

If the accused has been removed or suspended from office and is found not guilty of the allegations, the council should not reinstate the accused to his or her previous position of leadership until they, in consultation with law enforcement authorities/Child Protection Services, legal counsel, and child abuse experts, deem it safe and proper to do so.

A church leader (i) who has made a confession of child abuse, (ii) who has been convicted of child abuse in a court of law, or (iii) whom council has been determined guilty of the abuse of a minor (collectively, a Determined Abuser) should not be reinstated to the position from which they have been removed or suspended without the advice of the church's legal counsel.

The council may (i) subject a determined abuser (hereafter abuser) to further suspension, deposition, employment termination, (ii) deny the abuser reinstatement to a future position with children or youth, or (iii) take such other action against the abuser as the circumstances may dictate.

The council should notify the congregation when a church leader is removed or suspended from office, position, or duty pending the outcome of an investigation into an allegation of child abuse. This notice should be in writing and should protect the identity and confidentiality of the accuser. This disclosure should be pastoral, objectively factual and not exceed the scope of the information known about the matter at that time. In addition, the council should not attempt to state any legal conclusions about the guilt or innocence of any person unless and until the council determines that a church leader is an abuser.

Subject to the best interest of the abused, the council should notify the congregation in writing if they conclude that a church leader is an abuser. This notice should protect the identity and confidentiality of any innocent parties, including the abused. This written communication should be pastoral and objectively factual.

Survivor care

Following any incident of abuse, special care should be taken for those who were directly and indirectly impacted. Counseling and other follow up care should be of the highest priority.

Ministry with people of special concern

There may be church participants who the church staff or safety team has determined need additional intervention and supervision. See *Preventing Child Abuse: Creating a Safe Place, Forth Edition*. Beth A. Swagman, *Faith Alive Resources – Appendix W*

Reintegration

See *Preventing Child Abuse: Creating a Safe Place, Fourth Edition*. Beth A. Swagman, Faith Alive Resources – Appendix W

Appendices

Volunteer Church Leader Application

Appendix A

All information will be kept confidential except as needed to affirm the validity of the information that you provided.

Name: _____ Contact Number(s): _____

Address: _____ DOB _____

Previous work/volunteer experience: _____

Position you are applying for: _____

Are you a member of Georgetown CRC? _____ If yes, for how long? _____

NOTE: Georgetown CRC participates with the Michigan State Police ICHAT system. Your signature on this application authorizes us to do a criminal background check through ICHAT.

Have you ever been charged, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony?
_____ If yes, please explain fully (use back of form)

Have you ever resigned or been removed from a volunteer position due to an allegation of misconduct?
_____ If yes, please explain fully. Please include the date(s) and organization(s) involved. Use the backside of this form if you need more space.

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and what you hope to accomplish with your involvement here at Georgetown. _____

I understand that my name and information will be submitted to the administrative staff of Georgetown Church for the purpose of affirming my character and fitness for children and youth ministry. I agree to serve spiritually, with integrity, and will participate in training and discipline to enhance ministry to children and youth. If I am dismissed or removed as a volunteer or employee of this church following an allegation of child abuse or sexual misconduct, I release Georgetown Church from any liability that may arise if the church discloses any such information to another church if it submits a valid request for a reference.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Your status as a volunteer will be reviewed every three years. Please advise us if any of the above listed information changes in the future.

Minor Volunteer Church Leader Application

Appendix B

All information will be kept confidential except as needed to affirm the validity of the information that you provided.

Name: _____ Contact Number(s): _____

Address: _____ DOB _____

Previous work/volunteer experience: _____

Position you are applying for: _____

Are you a member of Georgetown CRC? _____ If yes, for how long? _____

NOTE: Georgetown CRC participates with the Michigan State Police ICHAT system. Your signature on this application authorizes us to do a criminal background check through ICHAT.

Have you ever been charged, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony?
_____ If yes, please explain fully (use back of form)

Have you ever resigned or been removed from a volunteer position due to an allegation of misconduct?
_____ If yes, please explain fully. Please include the date(s) and organization(s) involved. Use the backside of this form if you need more space.

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and what you hope to accomplish with your involvement here at Georgetown. _____

I understand that my name and information will be submitted to the administrative staff of Georgetown Church for the purpose of affirming my character and fitness for children and youth ministry. I agree to serve spiritually, with integrity, and will participate in training and discipline to enhance ministry to children and youth. If I am dismissed or removed as a volunteer or employee of this church following an allegation of child abuse or sexual misconduct, I release Georgetown Church from any liability that may arise if the church discloses any such information to another church if it submits a valid request for a reference.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

For parent/guardian:

I have read the application and give permission for _____ to participate as a volunteer. I also authorize Georgetown CRC to conduct a background check through ICHAT.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Your status as a volunteer will be reviewed every three years. Please advise us if any of the above listed information changes in the future.

Church Leader Code of Ethics

Appendix C

Believing that God is calling me to serve at Georgetown Christian Reformed Church,

- I will do all in my power to promote the safety and wellbeing of everyone I encounter while performing my duties.
- I will respect each person's cultural and ethnic background.
- When working with youth...
 - My first priority will be to seek their spiritual, psychological, and social welfare
 - I will give the parent(s) of each child or youth full information about the program I am supervising or volunteering in.
 - I will not intentionally harm or betray a child or youth's trust
 - I will use reasonable means to protect each child or youth from abuse while he or she is in my care.
 - I will report a reasonable suspicion of abuse of a child or youth to a responsible person for a proper investigation.
 - If I wish to talk to a child or youth alone, it will be within the sight and sound of one or more adults.
 - I will answer a child or youth's questions openly and honestly.
 - I will work with the children or youth to set guidelines for acceptable behavior within the group. I will expect children or youth to act based on those guidelines. If a child or youth consistently breaks behavioral guidelines, I will seek help from parents and others to assist me in responding
 - If a child or youth is distressed, I will try to offer comfort and help, and I will encourage the child or youth to find appropriate help.
 - I will pray for each child or youth regularly and assure them that I care about them.
- I have accessed and familiarized myself with Georgetown Christian Reformed Church's safety manual located at georgetowncrc.org/safetypolicy
- I agree to adhere to the policies outlined in the manual.
- I realize the policy could result in suspension of my duties and removal from my position related to children within the church if an allegation of abuse or misconduct is made.
- I understand and agree that the church and its leaders should report all allegations of physical and sexual abuse to the appropriate authorities -- Child Protective Services and local law enforcement.
- I understand that the church council will make every effort to handle potential issues constructively and in a manner that will facilitate reconciliation if any allegation is found to be false.
- My signature acknowledges my understanding and agreement to this policy.

Printed name

Signature

Date

Process for Church Leader Approval (Member)

Appendix D

Georgetown's Church safety manual stipulates that to serve as a church leader one needs to be a member and complete the following steps:

1. Fully complete and submit a Church Leader Application Form (Appendix A or B as applicable)
2. Sign and submit the Church Leader [Code of Ethics](#) (Appendix C)
3. Be cleared through the Michigan State Police (ICHAT) system

This form will be attached to a completed recommendation packet

(attach all supporting documents to this form)

Check when completed and attached to this form

- Application
- Signed Code of Ethics
- ICHAT – Date:

Renewal dates:

Process for Church Leader Approval (Non-Member)

Appendix E

Georgetown's Church safety manual stipulates that in order to serve as a church leader one needs to be a member. By exception, the Church Safety Team has made provisions by which this requirement can be waived if the applicant completes the following steps

1. Fully complete and submit a Church Leader Application Form (Appendix A or B as applicable)
2. Sign and submit the Church Leader Code of Ethics (Appendix C)
3. Be cleared through the Michigan State Police (ICHAT) system
4. Obtain a letter of recommendation from an existing Church Leader at Georgetown
5. Obtain approval from the Executive Team

This form will be attached to a completed recommendation packet

(attach all supporting documents to this form)

Staff Member making recommendation: _____

Date: _____

Check when completed and attached to this form

- Application
- Signed Code of Ethics
- ICHAT – Date:
- Georgetown Letter of Recommendation
- Executive Team approval

ICHAT Renewal Dates:

Incident Report

Appendix F

Confidential

Date: _____

Person Making the report: _____ Contact number: _____

Co-Reporting staff member (if applicable): _____

Type of incident:

- Physical injury or health emergency
- Bullying/Social injury
- Physical altercation
- Abuse
- Other, describe:

Description of the incident (include who, what, when, where, and the circumstances):

Witnesses:

Was Child Protective Services/ Law Enforcement Notified? _____ When? _____

If Yes, Name of Contact and Agency: _____

Date Church Safety Team received report: _____

Date received by Church Safety Team:

Resolution:

Position Summary – Childcare Provider

Appendix G

Childcare providers serve as loving caregivers for young children and those in need of special assistance. They are called to be faith leaders, sharing the love of Christ in word and deed.

Childcare providers are called to...

- Promote the safety and wellbeing of children, completing the appropriate screening paperwork, and following the practices outlined in the safety policy.
- Help create a welcoming environment for children
- Communicate any serious incidents or concerns to the coordinating staff member.
- Arrive for their scheduled slot on time or communicate any absence as soon as possible.
- Alert parents to any concerns or incidents during the care session.
- Remain in communication with the appropriate staff member leading the ministry, sharing both ideas for improvement and concerns.
- Represent Georgetown Christian Reformed Church faithfully and submit to the leadership of the church council.
- Model Christian living both individually and in community with the Church.

Leader's name:

Date:

Position Summary – Children’s Worship Leader

Appendix H

Children’s worship leaders serve as teachers, mentors, and spiritual companions for children ages 3 through pre-kindergarten. They are called to be faith leaders, sharing the love of Christ in word and deed.

Children’s Worship Leaders are called to...

- Promote the safety and wellbeing of children, completing the appropriate screening paperwork, and following the practices outlined in the safety policy.
- Arrive at sessions faithfully and assist with tasks to make the ministry effective.
- Help create a welcoming environment for children.
- Be fully present with children during meetings, setting aside social/adult conversations and cell phones to be with kids.
- Contribute ideas and creativity to the ministry.
- Nurture a spirit of teamwork and community with fellow leaders and children.
- Remain in communication with the appropriate staff member leading the ministry, sharing both ideas for improvement and concerns.
- Represent Georgetown Christian Reformed Church faithfully and submit to the leadership of the church council.
- Model Christian living both individually and in community with the Church.

Leader’s name:

Date:

Position Summary – Kingdom Kids Leader

Appendix I

Kingdom Kids leaders serve as teachers, mentors, and spiritual companions for Children in grades Kindergarten through 5th. They are called to be faith leaders, sharing the love of Christ in word and deed.

Kingdom Kids leaders are called to...

- Promote the safety and wellbeing of children, completing the appropriate screening paperwork, and following the practices outlined in the safety policy.
- Attend Kingdom Kids sessions faithfully and assist with tasks to make the ministry effective.
- Help facilitate small group interactions.
- Be fully present with children during meetings, setting aside social/adult conversations and cell phones to be with kids.
- Contribute ideas and creativity to the ministry.
- Nurture a spirit of teamwork and community with fellow leaders and with students.
- Remain in communication with the appropriate staff member leading the ministry, sharing both ideas for improvement and concerns.
- Represent Georgetown Christian Reformed Church faithfully and submit to the leadership of the church council.
- Model Christian living both individually and in community with the Church.

Leader's name:

Date:

Position Summary – Cadet Leader

Appendix J

Cadet leaders serve as counselors, mentors, and spiritual companions with boys in 3rd to 5th grade. They are called to be faith leaders, sharing the love of Christ in word and deed.

Cadet leaders are called to...

- Promote the safety and wellbeing of boys, completing the appropriate screening paperwork, and following the practices outlined in the safety policy.
- Attend Cadet meetings faithfully and assist with tasks to make the ministry effective.
- Help facilitate small group interactions.
- Be fully present with boys during meetings, setting aside social/adult conversations and cell phones to be with students.
- Contribute ideas and creativity to the ministry.
- Nurture a spirit of teamwork and community with fellow leaders and with students.
- Remain in communication with the appropriate staff member leading the ministry, sharing both ideas for improvement and concerns.
- Help provide care to students who are sick, injured, in crisis, or in need of mentorship.
- Transport students following the [transportation guidelines](#).
- Represent Georgetown Christian Reformed Church faithfully and submit to the leadership of the church council.
- Model Christian living both individually and in community with the Church.

Leader's name:

Date:

Position Summary – GEMS Leader

Appendix K

GEMS (Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior) leaders serve as counselors, mentors, and spiritual companions with girls in 2nd to 5th grade. They are called to be faith leaders, sharing the love of Christ in word and deed.

GEMS leaders are called to...

- Promote the safety and wellbeing of girls, completing the appropriate screening paperwork, and following the practices outlined in the safety policy.
- Attend GEMS meetings faithfully and assist with tasks to make the ministry effective.
- Help facilitate small group interactions.
- Be fully present for girls during meetings, setting aside social/adult conversations and cell phones to be with students.
- Contribute ideas and creativity to the ministry.
- Nurture a spirit of teamwork and community with fellow leaders and with students.
- Remain in communication with the appropriate staff member leading the ministry, sharing both ideas for improvement and concerns.
- Help provide care to students who are sick, injured, in crisis, or in need of mentorship.
- Transport students following the [transportation guidelines](#).
- Represent Georgetown Christian Reformed Church faithfully and submit to the leadership of the church council.
- Model Christian living both individually and in community with the Church.

Leader's name:

Date:

Position Summary – Turning Point Leader

Appendix L

Turning Point leaders serve as counselors, mentors, care providers, and spiritual companions with those in middle school. They are called to be faith leaders, sharing the love of Christ in word and deed.

Turning Point leaders are called to...

- Promote the safety and wellbeing of young teens, completing the appropriate screening paperwork, and following the practices outlined in the safety policy.
- Attend Turning Point meetings faithfully and assist with tasks to make the ministry effective.
- Help facilitate small group interactions.
- Be fully present for students during meetings, setting aside social/adult conversations and cell phones to be with teens.
- Contribute ideas and creativity to the ministry.
- Nurture a spirit of teamwork and community with fellow leaders and with students.
- Remain in communication with appropriate staff members leading the ministry, sharing both ideas for improvement and concerns.
- Be available as a Faith Friend for Going Public (profession of faith preparation).
- Help provide care to students who are sick, injured, in crisis, or in need of mentorship.
- Use care and wisdom when using [communication technology and social media](#).
- Transport students following the [transportation guidelines](#).
- Represent Georgetown Christian Reformed Church faithfully and submit to the leadership of the church council.
- Model Christian living both individually and in community with the Church.

Leader's name:

Date:

Position Summary – Youth Group Leader

Appendix M

Youth Group leaders serve as counselors, mentors, care providers, and spiritual companions with those in high school. They are called to be faith leaders, sharing the love of Christ in word and deed.

Youth Group leaders are called to...

- Promote the safety and wellbeing of teens, completing the appropriate screening paperwork, and following the practices outlined in the safety policy.
- Attend Youth Group meetings faithfully and assist with tasks to make the ministry effective.
- Help facilitate small group interactions and create an emotionally safe place for teens.
- Be fully present for students during meetings, setting aside social/adult conversations and cell phones to be with teens.
- Contribute ideas and creativity to the ministry.
- Nurture a spirit of teamwork and community with fellow leaders and with students.
- Remain in communication with the appropriate staff member leading the ministry, sharing both ideas for improvement and concerns.
- Help lead service opportunities and retreats.
- Help provide care to students who are sick, injured, in crisis, or in need of mentorship.
- Use care and wisdom when using [communication technology and social media](#).
- Transport students following the [transportation guidelines](#).
- Represent Georgetown Christian Reformed Church faithfully and submit to the leadership of the church council.
- Model Christian living both individually and in community with the Church.

Leader's name:

Date:

2021-2022 Church Leadership

Pastors

Pastor of Congregational Life

Marc Nelesen | marcn@georgetowncrc.org | 616.405.2859

Specialized Transitional Minister

Dale Slings

Staff

Church Administrator

Sherri Kleyn | sherrick@georgetowncrc.org | 616.915.5982

Administrative Assistant

Sara Duggins | office@georgetowncrc.org | 616.648.6533

Director of Music and Worship

Katie Yankee | katiey@georgetowncrc.org | 616.209.2159

Director of Faith Formation

Eric DeYoung | ericd@georgetowncrc.org | 616.218.7456

Director of Children's Ministries

Cindy DeVries | cindyd@georgetowncrc.org | 616.644.1171

Director of Community Relationships

Amy Koetsier | amyk@georgetowncrc.org | 616.402.9547

Facilities Coordinators

Weekdays – Ron Terpstra | ront@georgetowncrc.org | 616.443.2111

Sunday - Glenn Schaap | 616.457.6344

Council

Elders (11)

Chair of Council

Mike Smith

Vice-Chair of Council

Preston Kallemeyn

Clerk

Gary Byker

Elder of Community Relationships

Stand Drenth

Shepherding Elders

Ed Hoezee

Rick Geenen

Shawn Grasman

Jeanne Kallemeyn

Jan Dykstra

Dan Miedema

Larry VanderVeen

Deacons (12)

Chair of Deacons

Ryan Kooiman

Vice-Chair of Deacons

Todd Schilthuis

Secretary of Deacons

Chad Essebaggers

Treasurer

Lynn Kapteyn

Deacon of Community Relationships

Rashelle Tamminga

Shepherding Deacons

Karen DeVries

Randy Glashower

Scott Anderson

Craig Mulder

Matt Smith

Jeff VanLaar

Bryce Zuiderveen

Care Providers

Sue Dyk

Cindy Glashower

Judy Glass

Penny Jenkins

Bob Kruisenga

Penny MacDonald

Melissa Markvluwer

Kathy Miedema

Kristen Mulder

Linda Norman

Shirley Raterink

Jane VanderVeen

Jim VanFarowe

Tina VanOtterloo

Sue Wierenga

Young Adult Care Providers

Jared Baas

Deb Bolton

Carol Brookhouse

Jackie Capel

Lydia Glashower

Stacy Grasman

Church Safety Team

Chad Essebaggers, deacon

Chris Velzen, member at large

Mark Konynenbelt, member at large

Ryan DeVries, member at large

Melissa Markvluwer, member at large

Citations and additional resources

- Preventing Child Abuse: Creating a Safe Place, Forth Edition. Beth A. Swagman, Faith Alive Resources <http://library.crcna.org/resource/preventing-child-abuse>
- Christian Reformed Church Network: <https://network.crcna.org/safe-church/creating-safe-church-policy>
- Church of the Servant Safety Policy - https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/policy_%20ChurchoftheServant.pdf
- River Terrace Church's policy - https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/policy_%20RiverTerraceChurch.pdf
- Michigan's Mandated Reporters' resource guide - https://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/SCAO/OfficesPrograms/CWS/Documents/Mandated_Reporters_Resource_Guide.pdf
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services mental health information - <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/what-to-look-for/suicidal-behavior>
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center – <http://www.sprc.org/>
- Centers for disease control self-injury information - <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandsafety/self-injury.html>
- Centers for disease control youth violence resources - <https://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/index.html>