

Child Protection Policy Statement For Tierrasanta Lutheran Church

Adopted by TLC Congregation on November 20, 2016

1. Introduction:

The Tierrasanta Lutheran Church congregation acknowledges the need to develop a written policy to ensure that a safe environment for children and youth is maintained within the congregation. This is an initial policy statement that establishes some basic elements of a written policy. In the future, the congregation may further develop a detailed and comprehensive written policy. The basic policy elements in this policy statement, particularly the Behavioral Guidelines, should help in ensuring protection of youth.

2. Purpose

It is the goal of all TLC members that our youth ministries will guide our youth to reach their full God-created potential throughout their lives.

TLC Youth ministries have been established for youth and adults to work together so that our youth can grow and participate in their baptismal relationships with Jesus, themselves, and the world. Regardless of where youth are in their faith journey, adult leaders serve to be positive Christian role models who are providing purposeful, safe, and fun opportunities for youth to get to know and connect to Jesus.

Youth activities are for our children to grow as individuals, personally and spiritually, while exploring ideas, values, and faith within the context of a safe, supportive, caring Christian community of peers and adults. More than programs, events, and service projects, TLC's youth ministries are about youth and adult leaders being role models for each other and helping each other build a relationship with Jesus Christ and inviting Him into every area in life.

At TLC, children's safety and well-being is every congregation member's responsibility. There is no substitute for care and vigilance. TLC's ministry with children and youth begins by striving to provide a safe environment and to provide caring and effective leaders. To promote this safe environment, the TLC congregation supports the Child Protection Policy statement described in this document.

3. Definitions: for the purpose of implementing this policy statement, the following definitions are established:

- a) Child or Children: The terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.
- b) Approved Adult: Anyone over 18 years of age who works with youth and has read this policy statement and completed and signed the TLC C Child Protection Covenant form. An Approved Adult can be a volunteer or an employee of the congregation.
- c) Employee: Any individual who is employed by Tierrasanta Lutheran Church on a full or part time basis.
- d) Adult Volunteer: An adult individual 18 years of age or older serving in an unpaid position who is responsible for the welfare of one or more children or has direct contact with children through any program, activity, and service sponsored by Tierrasanta Lutheran Church. This adult volunteer shall work under the supervision of two approved adults.
- e) Youth volunteer: A person who is anyone under 18 years of age who works under the supervision of two approved adults.
- f) Visitor: An adult individual 18 years of age or older whose actions do not meet the level of a volunteer. Visitor includes (1) a parent, close relative, or guardian who visits a classroom or church common area, or private meeting area to make a delivery to, meet with, or share a celebration time with, a church student who is the individual's child or other close relative or for whom the individual is the guardian; (2) an individual who attends a church extracurricular activity; or (3) an individual who is a speaker or participant visiting to share information with church students under supervision of a church employee or volunteer.

4. Responsibility of Those Working with Congregation's Youth:

Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the congregation's youth will not violate that responsibility by causing physical injury; mental injury; sexual abuse; or serious physical neglect of children.

5. Appropriate Behavioral Guidelines

To ensure that a safe environment for children and youth is maintained within the congregation, to protect children and youth who participate in activities sponsored by the church from sexual and/or physical abuse, and to protect the congregation's members from false allegations of abuse, the congregation supports good faith efforts to implement the following behavioral guidelines:

- a) Two Approved Adult Rule: Two Approved Adults should be present during any children's church activity. Doors should be left open or a window should allow easy observation of the room.
- b) Open Spaces: Whenever possible, adults will work with children in reasonable open spaces where others are welcome to enter.
- c) Empty Room Policy: After an activity, check rooms to ensure that all participants

have vacated the room.

- d) **Expressions of Affection:** Adults should use caution and common sense when physically expressing affection toward children. It is necessary to respect a child's refusal of affection and not make a child feel uncomfortable.
- e) **Overnight Rule:** Overnight activities involving children will be chaperoned by at least two Approved Adults. If the event involves children of both genders, then there should be at least one Approved Adult of each gender.
- f) **Transportation of Children:** When children and youth are transported for church activities they will be transported in groups with at least one Approved Adult in each vehicle.
- g) **Personal Vehicle Transportation:** To transport children in a personal vehicle, the driver must be 21 years of age or older.
- h) **Returning Child to Parents, Designated Adult, or Designated Visitor:** Following an event or activity, an approved adult will ensure that the child is returned to the child's parent, designated adult, or designated visitor.

6. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse:

For purposes of this policy statement, child abuse is defined as any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and including physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. The following are appropriate responses to allegations of child abuse:

- a) Childcare workers may become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the church Pastor and to the President of the congregation for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.
- b) In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure should be followed:
 - 1) The parent or guardian of the child will be notified,
 - 2) The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation, and
 - 3) Civil authorities will be notified, and the church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
- c) Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

7. Development of a Written Policy by a Child Protection Policy Committee (CPPC)

The purpose of the committee is to consider further development the policy, implement TLC's Child Protection Policy Statement, and to evaluate compliance. The Committee reviews the policy statement and considers needed improvements to this policy statement.

The committee shall consist of, but not be limited, to the Director of Youth Ministry and Coordinator of Youth. The Director of Youth Ministry will be the chairman of the committee. A member of the congregation may also serve on the committee, and the Director of the TLC Preschool may also choose to serve on the committee.

8. Child Protection Covenant—Agreement Form

The following agreement form shall be completed and signed by those agreeing to work with youth at Tierrasanta Lutheran Church:

Tierrasanta Lutheran Church

Child Protection Covenant

I accept the responsibility to nurture the Christian faith and the well being of the children and youth of Tierrasanta Lutheran Church and to care for them as Christ cares for me.

"Iwill tend to the flock of God that is in my charge...willingly, as God would have me do it....." – I Peter 5:2

I have read and understand and agree to abide by the Child Protection Policy Statement of Tierrasanta Lutheran Church.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of Witness _____ Date _____