

# **Spirit Alive Church**

## *Safe Haven for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults* **Safety and Abuse Policy**

*Approved by SALT September 16, 2015*

**Spirit Alive Church**

**Safe Haven Policy for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

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## ***Spirit Alive Church***

### **Safe Haven for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

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## **Covenant to Be a Safe Haven for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

We, the members of **Spirit Alive Church** *living out our faith*, as a Lutheran Church affirm our commitment to be a Safe Haven for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. Knowing that living in this covenant is a lifelong process of learning and caring, and knowing that we work with others in our immediate community, the wider church and the world to develop programs and places where all people can flourish, we ask God to help us.

### ***Mission Statement:***

To REACH out to all people, CONNECT them to God and a Christian Community, GROW together in faith, and SERVE God and God's creation

### ***Vision Statement:***

We see a welcoming family, living the Gospel of grace.  
We see a family where people can safely seek, question and be revived,  
We see a family energized by the Spirit alive in our midst.

## **Commitment**

*"But Jesus called the children to him and said,  
'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder  
them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' " - Luke 18:16*

As we "lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ" we will care for all people within Spirit Alive . It is the policy of Spirit Alive Church, Kenosha, to provide a safe environment for the children, youth and workers in our church. Ministry to and with our children, youth and vulnerable adults is deeply valued and to that end, procedures will be followed to protect them from harm in our church.

Because the legal and social environment of our society is turbulent and changing rapidly, it shall be our policy to monitor this external environment in light of our mission to "lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ." As a Christian body, we shall be proactive in reviewing our policies and procedures to make changes when necessary to provide a safe environment for the children, youth, vulnerable adults, volunteers and staff of our church.

### ***Why is a safety and abuse policy necessary?***

1. To protect children, youth and vulnerable adults: the creation of a secure, safe environment for our children and youth is of utmost importance (Matthew 18:1-10). The training and reference check processes are all screening procedures to assure the safety of our children.
2. To protect volunteers and staff: it is necessary to protect church staff and volunteer workers from potential meritless allegations of abuse
3. To raise awareness level: the goal is not to raise suspicion, but to become educated about the process and systems regarding protection of people at Spirit Alive Church.
4. Spirit Alive 's position in the community: because we are a leader in the greater Kenosha community, we need to be the best advocates for children, minors and vulnerable adults we can be.
5. Legal protection of Spirit Alive Church: there are several liability factors that dictate how we process our volunteers and paperwork.

### ***Parental Responsibility***

All parents should be encouraged to assume individual responsibility for their children and not assume the church- sponsored activity or presence on the church premises is a guarantee of the child's safety. Children should not be left unattended at church events.

## Vision of a Safe Haven

What does a Safe Haven for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults look like? What does it give to a child or vulnerable adult? What does it feel like to the congregation? What does it say to the community? In Holy Baptism, we make commitment to "renounce all the forces of evil..." (*LBW, page 123*). What are the "forces of evil" that threaten the safety of children and vulnerable adults in our setting? How can our congregation boldly state its belief in a God who creates, redeems, and sanctifies? The following are characteristics of a Safe Haven for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

### **In a safe haven children and vulnerable adults are safe from**

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Stereotypes
- Hunger
- Homelessness
- Rejection
- Financial exploitation

### **Children and vulnerable adults are safe to**

- Grow in faith
- Love God
- Love their neighbors
- Give
- Feel empathy
- Serve
- Discover
- Create
- Hope
- Be aware of their community
- Be aware of their world

### **In a safe haven children and vulnerable adults experience**

- Zero toleration of physical abuse
- Zero toleration of sexual abuse
- Zero toleration of emotional abuse
- Zero toleration of racism, sexism, ageism
- Immediate assistance in times of crisis
- Sensitivity to the issues poverty
- Resources allocated to create Safe Havens
- Zero tolerance of financial exploitation

### **Vision of a Safe Haven**

- Worship is child/vulnerable adult-friendly
- Worship is child/vulnerable adult-friendly including strong relationships between generations
- Commitment to teach and learn from children and vulnerable adults is evident
- Time is taken to talk with and listen to children and vulnerable adults
- All are challenged to grow in faith and service
- High standards for quality care and education are evident
- Joy and fun, rather than boredom
- Encouragement and enthusiasm is present
- Strong connections both locally and globally are made
- Seeing life through the eyes of a child or vulnerable adult

## Types of Child Abuse

While child abuse has gotten more attention in the last few decades (it wasn't until 1961 that the medical profession formally recognized child abuse), it is still a growing problem in our society. Child abuse can be described in four different categories: physical, mental, sexual, and neglect.

### **Physical Abuse**

- Inflicting injury upon a child by other than accidental means, which causes death, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function.
- Placing a child in a situation where they will likely be injured.
- Inflicting injury by punching, kicking, biting, burning or otherwise physically harming a child.

### **Mental Abuse**

- Emotional, or psychological injury that causes, or could cause, behavioral, emotional, or mental disorders.
- Verbal comments, actions or statements that would cause children to believe their persons, emotions, physical form, families, race, background, religious background, or social status is somehow bad, inferior, unacceptable or shameful.
- Emotional abuse is almost always present with other types of abuse.

### **Sexual Abuse**

- Child sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child in any setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child.
- Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent.
- Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially or developmentally ready.
- Child sexual abuse may include actual or threatened touching or non-touching behavior.
- Types of child sexual abuse include the following:  
fondling; oral, genital or anal penetration, intercourse, forcible rape, pornographic pictures, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, allowing children to view sexual activity, etc.

### **Neglect**

This can be:

- physical, such as delay of nourishment or health care
- educational, such as permitting a child to be truant from school
- emotional, such as extreme spousal abuse in front of the child; or failing to provide psychological care as needed
- financial, such as not providing adequately for the child

While it is possible that only one type of child abuse could be noticed in a situation, it is more likely that more than one category of abuse will be present. As with any problem, an awareness of the indicators for that problem can be a big first step in the right direction.

## ***Vulnerable Adult Abuse***

### **Who is a vulnerable adult?**

A vulnerable adult in the state of Wisconsin is a person who is 18 years of age or older and who fits the criteria of either categorical vulnerable adult or functional vulnerable adult.

***Categorical:*** either a resident of a licensed facility, a recipient of services from a licensed facility or provider, or a recipient of licensed home health care services or state funded personal care attendant services.

***Functional:*** a person with physical or mental infirmity, or emotional dysfunction which impairs his/her ability to meet basic needs and own ability to protect themselves from maltreatment.

- unable to meet own basic needs: food, shelter clothing
- unable to perform activities of daily living: bathing, grooming, dressing, shopping, cooking, eating, cleaning, paying bills, administering medications.
- unable to protect self from maltreatment: identify maltreatment, escape from maltreatment, ask for/call for assistance, develop and implement a protective plan
- has diminished mental capacity

## ***Types of Abuse***

### ***Assault***

- Conduct producing pain or injury, such as hitting, slapping, kicking, pinching, use of force to compel cooperation, involuntary confinement, deprivation
- Use of malicious language (oral, written, or gesture) toward a vulnerable adult: disparaging, humiliating, harassing or threatening
- Criminal sexual conduct
- Use of drugs to injure or to facilitate a crime
- Promotion of prostitution

### ***Neglect***

- Failure to provide care or services such as: food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical care
- May be caused by self or caregiver

### ***Financial Exploitation***

- By legal fiduciary: unauthorized expenditure or failure to use financial resources to provide basic needs of the vulnerable adult
- By others: willfully uses, withholds, or disposes of the vulnerable adult's funds or property ; obtains control or interest in vulnerable adult's funds or property through undue influence, harassment, duress, deception or fraud

## **Spirit Alive 's Procedures in Preventing Abuse**

Legal requirements call for the church to take specific action in worker/volunteer selection and supervision, and in the reporting of allegations of abuse. Spirit Alive Church has chosen to implement and follow the following procedures with volunteer workers.

### ***Volunteer Screening and Training Process***

- Authorization for Criminal Background Records Check
- Training for volunteers

### **Supervision Guidelines**

#### ***Reporting Obligations***

Individuals Who **Will Not** Be Allowed To Work With Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults

- Individuals convicted of child abuse or molestation.
- Convicted felons.
- Individuals with illness or character problems that could affect or impair working with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

### ***Spirit Alive 's Policy Regarding People with Disabilities***

We want all people to be included in the ministries and activities at Spirit Alive . Because most events are run by volunteers and staff and not trained medical/health care staff, our Safe Haven Policy does not allow staff or volunteers to take care of special health/physical needs of others, e.g., self-care, toileting, monitoring medications, feeding, etc. In order for each person to get the most out of events (especially overnight and day- long retreats), those requiring assistance with physical cares will need to invite a friend, family member or attendant to assist them.

### ***Spirit Alive 's Leadership Expectations***

The leaders of the programmatic areas of Children, Youth and Family Ministries are in a public and visible position within the church and are looked at as role models for the participants of our programs. Spirit Alive Church expects that these leaders, whether children or adults, live their lives in accordance with Biblical principles. The staff of Spirit Alive reserves the right to make judgments about whether individuals should or should not be granted leadership roles based on those principles. These include, but are not limited to, background, recommendations, reputation within the community, lifestyle and being a member in good standing based on our by-laws in the life of Spirit Alive Church.

## **Volunteer Screening Process**

All references to "children" and "youth" in the following procedures refer to children under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults.

The following screening process will be followed for any person wishing to serve as a volunteer at Spirit Alive Church:

Any person who seeks to volunteer at Spirit Alive Church who may have or seeks to have access to children and vulnerable adults to whom Spirit Alive Church provides care, education, training, instruction or recreation, shall truthfully complete, date and sign a "Confidential Application and Authorization for Background Check for Volunteers and Staff with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults".

The failure to complete, date and sign these documents or any other document necessary to process the authorization will be considered as a withdrawal of the application for the position under consideration.

As a result of the reference check or for any other reason, Spirit Alive Church may request a background records check to determine whether the applicant is the subject of any reported conviction for background check crimes, under the provisions of the National Child Protection Act.

If in the opinion of the Pastor, the applicant presents a serious potential threat to the safety of children or vulnerable adults at Spirit Alive , the applicant shall be denied the opportunity to work at Spirit Alive Church.

### **About your privacy**

A record of contact with references identified by the applicant shall be maintained and secured in the applicant's personnel file, and shall contain information about each contact.

In the event Spirit Alive Church determines to request a background records check, the applicant shall be informed that:

- Spirit Alive Church will request a background records check of the applicant to determine if the applicant has been arrested or convicted of any child abuse crimes, murder, manslaughter, assault, kidnapping, arson, criminal sexual behavior, prostitution-related crimes or any other felonies.
- The applicant has a right to be informed by Spirit Alive of the response of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to the background records check and to obtain from Spirit Alive a copy of the background records check report.
- The applicant has a right to obtain from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension any record that forms the basis for the report.
- The applicant has a right to be informed by Spirit Alive Church if the applicant has been denied an opportunity to work with children because of the response from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

- The applicant has the right to challenge the accuracy and completeness of any information contained in the background check report or record by appealing to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.
- The applicant has the right not to be required to pay the cost of the background records check.
- Only the President, vice President and Pastor may review the information contained in the response of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

### ***Safe Haven Guidelines for Spirit Alive Volunteers***

1. All volunteers who work with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall complete the Spirit Alive Application and Authorization for Background Check.
2. The President, Vice President or Pastor must approve volunteers considered for any position involving contact with children, youth or vulnerable adults if the volunteer has not been involved with Spirit Alive for a minimum of six (6) months.
3. Persons who are known to have committed acts of sexual misconduct with children, youth or vulnerable adults or are known to have been accused of acts of sexual misconduct or other abuse are strictly prohibited from serving in ministry to children, youth or vulnerable adults unless the allegation is found to be without merit. Such persons may be encouraged to serve in other ministries where they have no contact with minors or vulnerable adults.
4. Volunteers, including adults and youth, responsible for any church activity involving contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults are required to complete Spirit Alive 's Safe Haven training or other approved training.
5. Volunteers should be instructed that sexual contact or other abuse with minors or vulnerable adults can lead to a felony conviction and imprisonment in a state penitentiary.
6. Volunteers should be trained to identify inappropriate behavior with children, youth or vulnerable adults. Workers will be encouraged to advise each other when questionable behavior is displayed. Questionable behaviors should be reported to the proper supervising staff person.
7. Volunteers shall not be alone with one child, youth or vulnerable adult in an area that has no public visibility.
8. Spirit Alive staff and/or other supervisory leaders will make random visits to classrooms and other areas used by children, youth or vulnerable adults.
9. Supervision of children should be provided before and after the event until all children are in the custody of parents or legal guardians.
  - Ministries serving children in first through sixth grades shall release children to the parents or appointed guardians.
10. Volunteers wishing to hold events on the church premises at alternate times or off of church premises must receive advance approval for the event by submitting the Alternate Event Form (Form B) to the appropriate Spirit Alive staff person. These events also require signed Parental Permission Authorization and Release Forms (Form C).
11. In order to promote safety, it will be the responsibility of designated staff and/or leaders to supervise all programs and activities involving children, youth and vulnerable adults.

## To Report Abuse

Our governing principle is that we know that it is in God's heart and will to care for and protect children and adults. Our considerations/goals are:

- Care and protection for victim(s) and their families
- Clear and compassionate public stance
- Protection for members, public, Spirit Alive
- Respect for accused

## Who Should Report Abuse?

- Volunteers (supervisors/staff can help you make report)
- Staff
- Mandatory reporters (are professionals, or professionals delegates, law enforcement, teachers, doctors, nurses, pastors, social workers).

## How to Report?

### What to Report

- Vulnerable adult
- Caregiver
- Nature and extent of suspected maltreatment
- Time, date, location of incident
- Any evidence of previous maltreatment

For more information see [www.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/Stat0048.pdf](http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/Stat0048.pdf)

If you know or suspect that a child, youth or vulnerable adult is in **immediate** danger, call 911.

- **Reports for Children and Youth:** Child Protection To report Child Abuse/Neglect in Kenosha County: 262-605-6582. After hours number: 262-657-7188
- **Reports for Vulnerable Adults:** Adults at Risk (ADRC) 262-605-6646, Toll-Free: 800-472-8008 After Hours Phone: 262-657-7188. Make report immediately or within 24-hours. When in doubt, make a report.

## Protection for Reporters

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

## ***Safe Haven for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults***

### **Alternate Event Request Form**

Events or activities for Spirit Alive groups sponsored by volunteers and held ***on the church premises at alternate times*** or ***off of church premises*** must be approved in advance by submitting this form to the appropriate Spirit Alive staff person. It is required that at least one parent of one of the participants (other than the person leading the event) accompanies the group.

Prior to the event, the staff person must receive signed Parental Permission Authorization and Release Forms (Form C) from all participants, and, if transportation is required, a completed Transportation Volunteer Form (Form D) from each provider.

Date submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Location/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/s who will accompany you:

\_\_\_\_\_

Will anyone else accompany the group? (e.g., spouse, child, friend) Please list:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Will transportation be required? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list drivers: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Spirit Alive Staff approval signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Safe Haven for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

### Parental Permission Authorization and Release Form

(Please bring this to the event when you come)

I understand my child, \_\_\_\_\_, has been invited to attend the following described event sponsored by Spirit Alive Church

Event: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student's grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby grant permission for my child to attend the above-described event and also specifically release Spirit Alive Church, its employees and volunteers from any and all liability for injury or death, which may occur as a result of or in connection with this event.

Signature of Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### PHOTOGRAPH RELEASE

I give consent for my child(ren) \_\_\_\_\_ to be photographed, videotaped and/or audio recorded by Spirit Alive Church and its representatives. I understand that these recordings may be used in church literature such as newsletters, brochures, presentations and on the church website, [www.spiritalivechurch.com](http://www.spiritalivechurch.com). Furthermore, these pictures may be sent to the local newspaper, published in the Greater Milwaukee Synod publications ([www.milwaukee-synod.org](http://www.milwaukee-synod.org)) or sent to the ELCA and The Lutheran Magazine for publication.

Signature of Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR TRANSPORTATION

I understand and agree that I will not hold Spirit Alive Church liable for any injuries my child may sustain while being transported by volunteer drivers to and from this event by volunteer drivers.

Signature of Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### PARENTAL AUTHORIZATION FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

In case of medical emergency, I understand every effort will be made to contact the parents or guardians of the youth. In the event I cannot be reached, I hereby give permission to the medical examiner selected by Spirit Alive staff to hospitalize, secure proper treatment, order injections, anesthesia or surgery for my child as named on this form.

Signature of Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Company or Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child(ren): \_\_\_\_\_

***Safe Haven for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults***

**Transportation Volunteer Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Event you are volunteering for: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a valid driver's license? \_\_\_\_\_ License Number: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have current insurance? \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Insurance Company \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Agent: \_\_\_\_\_ Agent's Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you had any traffic violations? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, list type of violation \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Wisconsin State Law Governing the Responsibility to Report Suspected Child Abuse***

### **Professionals Required to Report**

**Citation: Ann. Stat. § 48.981**

The following professionals are required to report:

- Physicians, coroners, medical examiners, nurses, dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, acupuncturists, other medical or mental health professionals, physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, dietitians, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, audiologists, or emergency medical technicians
- Schoolteachers, administrators, or counselors
- Child care workers in child care centers, group homes, or residential care centers, or child care providers
- Alcohol or other drug abuse counselors, marriage and family therapists, professional counselors, or members of the treatment staff employed by or working under contract with a county department or a residential care center for children and youth
- Social workers, public assistance workers, first responders, police or law enforcement officers, mediators, or court-appointed special advocates
- Members of the clergy or a religious order, including brothers, ministers, monks, nuns, priests, rabbis, or sisters

### **Reporting by Other Persons**

**Citation: Ann. Stat. § 48.981**

Any person, including an attorney, who has reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected or who has reason to believe that a child has been threatened with abuse or neglect and that abuse or neglect of the child will occur may report.

### **Standards for Making a Report**

**Citation: Ann. Stat. § 48.981**

A report is required when:

- A reporter, in the course of his or her professional duties, has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected.
- A reporter, in the course of his or her professional duties, has reason to believe that a child has been threatened with abuse or neglect or that abuse or neglect will occur.

### **Privileged Communications**

**Citation: Ann. Stat. § 48.981**

A member of the clergy is not required to report child abuse information that he or she receives solely through confidential communications made to him or her privately or in a confessional setting if he or she is authorized to hear or is accustomed to hearing such communications and, under the disciplines, tenets, or traditions of his or her religion, has a duty or is expected to keep those communications secret. Those disciplines, tenets, or traditions need not be in writing.

### **Inclusion of Reporter's Name in Report**

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

### **Disclosure of Reporter Identity**

**Citation: Ann. Stat. § 48.981**

The identity of the reporter shall not be disclosed to the subject of the report.