



Ministry Handbook
for working with
Children, Youth, and
Vulnerable Adults

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

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Youth, Children, and Vulnerable Adults

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Welcome to Ministry at Gloria Dei!

Ministry with children, youth, vulnerable adults, and their families at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church is a dynamic team effort. It takes the efforts and dedication of many people -- staff members, parents and volunteers -- to carry out this ministry. We are here to help all of our members grow in faith and take their place in our congregation and world as those who proclaim and embody the love of Jesus Christ.

This handbook contains the policies and procedures of our church relating to children's ministries, as well as many helpful suggestions for ministering to our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Some of these policies are required by our insurance carrier in order to reduce the risk of harm to those with whom we work or our volunteers.

Whether you are the parent or guardian of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult in our program or a volunteer who serves in one of our many ministries, it is important that you read this handbook. The safety, well-being, and faith development of all of our people depend on consistent and loving application of these principles.

If you have any questions regarding anything in this handbook, please feel free to call us at 651-699-1378, or e-mail the staff of Gloria Dei.

God be with you in your ministry to the young and most vulnerable members of our church!

Yours in Christ,

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Gloria Dei's Mission

By God's grace, we are called to be a caring, healing and welcoming community who proclaim and celebrate the love of Jesus Christ, live as God's servants and seek justice for all people.

Gloria Dei's Welcoming Statement

We believe that the gospel is God's gift to all people, to be shared unconditionally, without regard to age, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family configuration or relationship status, socio-economic status, mental health status, or physical or mental abilities. We know that the world is often an unloving place and that the experience of alienation is all too common. To those who have felt excluded here or elsewhere, we extend a particular welcome in Christ's love. We rejoice that diversity has enriched, nurtured and challenged the life and ministry we share as members of the body of Christ and workers in the kingdom of God.

Land Acknowledgment

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church recognizes that its building stands on traditional Dakota land near Bdote Mni Sota, the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, the center of creation for Dakota people and also sacred to Ojibwe. The congregation acknowledges that this land was taken from Indigenous people by exploitation and violence. Given the deep significance of this sacred ground, as well as its painful history, the congregation recognizes its responsibility to use this land, its building and mission for the work of reconciliation and healing with Native people. The congregation repents of this injustice that continues to harm Native communities and pledges to work for justice, peace and the well being of all creation.

Faith Formation Mission

Faith Formation at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church strives to meet people where they are by providing sustained opportunities to discover connections between God's story and their own stories within the context of various communities.

Faith Qualities for Ministry with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

Volunteers at Gloria Dei are vital to our ministries. Many of our programs would not exist if it were not for the leaders who graciously commit their time, energy, and faith. Obviously, those who are willing to volunteer in ministries care for people, enjoy their company and want to be with them. But there are also other qualities that make people well suited for this ministry. Here is a list of **faith qualities reflected by those who volunteer** with youth, children or vulnerable adults at Gloria Dei:

1. We believe we are justified by God's grace through Jesus Christ and not by our own actions. Baptism claims us as members of God's kingdom. We witness to a faith centered on the love of God as proclaimed in Christ Jesus.
2. We take the Holy Scriptures seriously as the foundation for our faith. We read them regularly and use them in our ministry with others.
3. We believe God's grace comes to us through Word and Sacrament, and we worship regularly to participate in the means of grace.
4. We accept Gloria Dei's Mission Statement (see page 4). We strive to care for, welcome, and heal in our interactions with all people and their families.
5. We understand Gloria Dei's Welcoming Statement (see page 4). We know of our commitment in being a Reconciling in Christ Congregation and our efforts toward racial justice. We acknowledge that our building stands on traditional Dakota land near Bdote Mni Sota, the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, the center of creation for Dakota people and also sacred to Ojibwe. We consciously work to welcome people who may have felt excluded here or elsewhere, and to work for justice.
6. We commit to Caring for Creation and limit waste in our activities.
7. We witness to our faith by giving financially to the church and its wider mission. We support the benevolence efforts of Gloria Dei through our ongoing gifts to outside ministries, including the St. Paul Area Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
8. We model behavior we hope our young people will practice. We participate in educational and service opportunities, and strive to have an active prayer life. We look for ways of living our faith every day at home, at work, and in our community.
9. We strive through our ministry to help develop and nurture Christ-centered relationships, and to create an enthusiasm for life-long faith development in all the people with whom we serve.

Policies

The following policies and principles are meant to protect and safeguard the children, youth, vulnerable adults, and volunteers of Gloria Dei, and to help us model safe, healthy, and appropriate behaviors in our ministries.

Definitions

1. For the purpose of these policies, we define “**children and youth**” as those people 17 years of age or younger, including all high school students. “**Parent**” denotes a child’s legal custodial parent(s) or legal guardian(s).
2. A “**vulnerable adult**” is anyone over the age of 18 who, because of physical or mental disability or dependency on institutional services, is particularly vulnerable to maltreatment.
3. “**Volunteers**” are those people who actively serve ministries at Gloria Dei. The volunteer procedures listed here and on page 11 of this document refer to people who are assigned leadership and/or supervisory responsibilities with children and youth.
4. “**Staff**” refers to paid employees of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, and any interns or field education students who have been assigned to serve at Gloria Dei as part of their higher education training.

Inclusivity

1. Gloria Dei welcomes members, visitors, and friends to all of our ministries. We want to include as many youth and children as possible, and we encourage you to invite friends to come with you. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend any activity with their child.
2. Gloria Dei will not discriminate against any person based on age, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family configuration or relationship status, socio-economic status, mental health status, or physical or mental abilities. Gloria Dei offers financial aid for all of our activities. If you or someone you know is unable to afford the fee for one of our activities, please contact a pastor or staff member to confidentially discuss a scholarship.

Supervision

1. Volunteers with children and youth will work under a "Dual Supervision" policy wherever possible; i.e., two adult volunteers will be present at activities, classes, child-care situations, small groups, etc.
2. Volunteers who meet individually with youth or children in a mentoring relationship should meet only in public places and always with parental awareness of when/where the meeting occurs. Volunteers will follow guidelines for meeting with minors as described in the *Protect My Ministry* materials.
3. When youth or children ask to meet privately with staff members, staff will offer to meet with them in open areas, or in offices with windows or open doors. Staff will follow the guidelines for meeting with minors as described in the *Protect My Ministry* materials.

Discipline & Expectations

1. Children and youth are expected to be considerate and courteous to all adult leaders and peers. We treat other people, all physical property, and ourselves appropriately and respectfully.
2. Gloria Dei tries to keep children and youth fully interested and involved in activities, and therefore discipline problems are unusual. Occasionally, however, negative behavior does occur, which we address with the following steps:
 - a. Staff and volunteers use verbal reminders to encourage appropriate behavior. **At no time is physical punishment or abusive language permitted or condoned.**
 - b. If verbal warnings are not heeded, staff or volunteers separate a child briefly from an activity and offer the child an opportunity to modify his/her/their behavior.
 - c. If behavioral problems continue, the leaders contact the child's parent so the parent, leader and child can together discuss the behavior and make appropriate plans for further interactions.
 - d. If a child or youth cannot participate in an event or activity appropriately, a parent is contacted and will be responsible for transporting the child home.
3. Parents are required to complete an online registration for each of their children enrolled in ministries at Gloria Dei, found on the Children's Ministry page of the Gloria Dei website. Volunteers are required to complete the *Protect My Ministry* volunteer training and registration every three years.

Parental Supervision

Parents assume individual responsibility for their children when on the premises of Gloria Dei. Children are not permitted to be in the Gymnasium or in the Main Kitchen without adult supervision.

Drugs and Alcohol

The use of any controlled substance (**including alcohol, cannabis, and all tobacco products**), and the misuse of any prescription or over-the-counter medication is prohibited at all youth events. This rule applies to youth and adult chaperones. (Exceptions: Communion wine and prescribed use of medications listed on parental permission slips.)

Overnight Events

Sleeping accommodations are managed so that youth and adults are not sleeping in the same room unless the entire group is sleeping in one common area. A minimum of two adults are required to be present in the room at all times.

Sleeping arrangements may not always permit an adult chaperone in every room, cabin, or tent. Adult supervision from outside the room or tent may be permitted provided parents of youth or children involved are notified in advance and have consented to such supervision within the past year.

Transportation

1. Transporting youth from one place to another during a youth event is the responsibility of adults at least 21 years of age and out of high school. All driving laws (especially those regarding speed limits and use of safety belts) are to be observed at all times. Youth transporting themselves or others to or from off-site events must have written permission of their parents and the parents of any of their passengers.
2. Parents are expected to notify adult leaders if their child(ren) will be leaving an event at a time other than the event's designated ending time.
3. Drivers for events will have their driving records checked on the background check. Those who offer to drive must complete the background check information.

Movies and Media

We do not show "R" rated movies to high school youth (grades 9-12), or "PG-13" or "R" rated movies to middle school youth (grades 6-8) or younger children unless the movie is judged to be relevant and appropriate by a member of the pastoral or program staff and publicized as part of an event. Music and video games with parental warnings describing violent or offensive content are inappropriate for use during church-sponsored events.

Water Trips

1. Wearing life jackets is mandatory for all youth and adults participating in boating activities.
2. Chaperones may insist youth wear life jackets while swimming when deemed necessary.

Firearms and Fireworks

Fireworks, firecrackers, guns and any other explosive devices shall not be brought, purchased or used on any activity.

Medical Concerns

1. Gloria Dei will maintain confidentiality in regard to any health or medical information that has been shared with us. With parental consent, we may inform those staff and volunteers who are directly involved with a child or youth who need to know this information to ensure the health and safety of the child, themselves, or the other youth involved in the activity.
2. First Aid kits are available on each floor of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. Locations of these kits are posted in the church office.
3. Parents shall not send their children to events, rehearsals or classes when the child is contagious or exhibiting contagious symptoms. If a child begins to exhibit symptoms of any contagious disease, parents will be promptly notified and asked to take their child home.
4. Parents are responsible for informing staff/volunteers of any allergies, medications, or medical concerns of their child, and for helping us develop plans to address their children's concerns.
5. Children with open wounds or lesions will be required to keep wounds covered.
6. Only parents/guardians of children will change the diapers of their child. Changing tables are available in several bathrooms around the building.

Universal Precautions

Universal precautions shall be used in any situation where exposure to bodily fluids is possible. Any time a parent, volunteer or staff person treats an injury, or is exposed (or faces the possibility of exposure) to bodily fluids, he/she should follow these procedures:

1. Use disposable gloves while dealing with the injury. Dispose of gloves in a secured plastic bag.
2. Place any soiled clothes in a sealed bag and give it to the parent/caregiver.
3. Dispose of all waste and any contaminated paper or first aid products.
4. Disinfect the affected surfaces with a disinfecting solution (bleach or Quat) when finished (available in custodian's closets and in the kitchen). Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water afterwards.

Accounting for Group Trips

Many ministries, retreats and mission trips sponsored by Gloria Dei cost more than our budget allows. Costs for such trips are normally paid by the participants. The supervisor shall develop a time schedule, plan and budget for each trip and will track changes accordingly as plans develop and registrations are received.

1. Deposits and Payments
 - a. Minimum deposit to hold a reservation for a place in a trip will be determined by the leaders, or will be the total amount if the total cost is under \$100. If airfare is involved, a minimum of 50% of the ticket will be paid at the time of purchase of the ticket.
 - b. All costs/fees by each participant will be paid no later than 30 days prior to the start of the trip.
 - c. Participants or their parents will be kept informed of the total cost for each participant. This may be an estimated cost initially, but final cost information shall be provided when plans are finalized and the data is available.
2. Refund of Deposits
 - a. Refunds will only be permitted to the extent that participant payments exceed costs that have been incurred on behalf of a participant. (e.g. If we have already paid registration costs, or a portion of transportation costs, a refund cannot be given on that portion. On the other hand, if someone has paid \$200 down and we have incurred no costs, a full refund will be issued.) Any exceptions must be approved by the Senior Pastor.
3. Fundraisers
 - a. Money raised through fundraising for a trip shall be recorded and credited to participant(s) on a basis determined by the supervisors and shall be tracked by the bookkeeper.

Procedures for Reporting & Responding to Abuse

Should a parent, volunteer or staff person observe, suspect or receive a report of any behavior or activity that conflicts with the policies of this handbook, or that seems abusive or destructive to a child, youth, vulnerable adult, or volunteer, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. Step in and **STOP** the behavior or activity.
2. Contact a member of the Gloria Dei pastoral or program staff promptly for consultation.
3. After the safety of the vulnerable child, youth, or adult is secured, and in consultation with the member of the pastoral or program staff, a plan will be discussed to confront the individual with his/her/their behavior and take steps to remedy the situation. If deemed necessary, we will include legal counsel and/or law enforcement personnel in our plans.
4. Should the behavior or activity involve a member of the pastoral or program staff, and the individual does not feel comfortable speaking with any member of the pastoral or program staff, he/she/they should instead contact the president or another member of the congregation council.
5. All reports, conversations, and steps taken regarding an allegation of abuse will be documented and handled forthrightly with due respect for confidentiality and privacy for both victim and accused.

If the behavior involves physical or criminal abuse, the following procedures will also take place:

6. A pastoral or program staff member will contact the following persons promptly:
 - a. 911, if necessary
 - b. the child's parents (unless doing so would put child in greater risk)
 - c. Midwest Children's Resource Center of Children's Hospital (651-220-6750) (provides legal advice & assistance in reporting or responding to abuse)
 - d. our church administrator who will contact our insurance carrier and legal counsel
 - e. our Synodical Bishop's office (651-224-4313).
7. Only the senior pastor or president of the congregation council will issue statements to the media regarding an accusation of abuse.

Volunteer Process

The following pages include policies and procedures to help limit the risk of harm to children, youth, vulnerable adults, and all volunteers involved in ministries of this congregation.

Staff: All clergy and rostered lay professionals are subject to the St. Paul Area Synod Minnesota Statute Section 148A, criminal background check prior to beginning ministry at Gloria Dei. All non-rostered Gloria Dei paid staff (as well as interns or field workers who are assigned to Gloria Dei as part of their higher education training) will undergo a criminal background check prior to beginning work at Gloria Dei. All paid staff members are subject to the most current Employee Handbook.

Volunteers: Those assigned to leadership and/or supervisory responsibilities with children, youth, or vulnerable events refers, for example, to Sunday School teachers, confirmation small group and retreat leaders, homebound visitors, choir directors, and others involved in ongoing, active ministry programs. Also included are those who volunteer in high-risk one-time events, such as overnight chaperones.

- **Six Month Involvement**

Each person who offers to volunteer in a supervisory role with youth, children, or a vulnerable adult is asked to have been actively involved at Gloria Dei for at least six months.

- Actively involved means: attends worship or participates regularly in ministries of the congregation, and has had contact with a member of the pastoral or program staff. Exceptions will be made only in consultation with the pastoral staff.

- **Meeting with Staff Members**

Each potential volunteer meets (through email, phone contact, or in person) with a member of the pastoral or program staff to discuss the areas of ministry in which he/she/they would like to serve. At this meeting, staff will provide a copy of our Ministry Handbook and review related procedures.

- **Protect My Ministry**

As of May 1, 2018, all volunteers over the age of 18 are required to complete the online Child Safety Training from *Protect My Ministry* before serving with children or youth at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, and to repeat the training every three years.

- **Volunteer Background & Reference Checks**

All ongoing, regular volunteers with youth, children, or vulnerable adults over the age of 18 are required to give permission for a background check through the *Protect My Ministry* website every three years. Results and information received through background and reference checks may be used to determine one's eligibility to volunteer in ministries with youth, children, or vulnerable adults.

Youth Volunteers (17 years of age or younger, including all high school students): Gloria Dei encourages young people to serve in our congregation as a means of living out their faith. A teen assisting in an area of ministry does not count as one of the two leaders in our dual supervision policy and is not subject to the above screening/selection procedure. Teens are required to follow the policies and procedures described in this handbook along with all other volunteers.

Classroom Visitors: Parents or guests are encouraged to visit any ministry at Gloria Dei, and to offer support or assistance to the leaders as would be helpful. A classroom visitor who has not completed a background check through *Protect My Ministry* is not counted as one of the two leaders in our dual supervision policy, and will not be assigned leadership or supervisory roles of children.

Joint Ministries in which Children are not Supervised by their Parents: When Gloria Dei partners with other congregations for joint ministries housed at Gloria Dei, each volunteer who comes from any participating congregation will have completed a background check within the last three years at his/her home congregation, or will complete the background check form and view the Child Safety Training video from *Protect My Ministry*. Gloria Dei recommends that any volunteer serving in joint ministries will have been active in his/her sponsoring congregation for six months.