



Policy of The Community Church of Sebastopol

Title: **Safe Church Policy**

Affected body: Primarily directed at staff and volunteers who minister to minors and other vulnerable persons. Secondarily directed to all church members in an effort to educate and equip everyone in providing a safe and secure environment.

Approved by: Leadership Council

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Safe Church Policy team

Proposed & Reviewed by:

Reviewed with minor
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2024, by Gina Scribner
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A. Purpose & Background:

Purpose Our purpose is to provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, and vulnerable adults at The Community Church of Sebastopol (Community Church), as a reflection of the love and hospitality we have come to know in Jesus Christ. By establishing and implementing this policy, we seek to protect them from sexual, physical, and emotional abuse while participating in Community Church activities. We also seek to prevent unwarranted claims of abuse and to protect our church from financial liability.

Background: We confess the tragic reality that churches have not always been safe places for children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Exploitation and sexual abuse can occur in all faith communities, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. We believe any abuse of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult is



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intolerable, and thus we must confess our complicity when we are tempted to believe, “It can’t happen here.”

B. Policy:

I. Key Roles and Implementation

- The Leadership Council approves and implements this policy. Any changes to this policy needs Leadership Council approval.
- The pastors and staff team provides training on the policy for all staff and volunteers. Trainings are provided on an annual basis, or more frequently as needed. Any questions about the policy that arise outside of trainings should be discussed with the appropriate pastor for that area of ministry.
- All staff and volunteers must abide by the guidelines and procedures. Failure to follow this policy may result in termination from employment or volunteer service, and put individuals at risk for accusations of child or elder abuse.
- The Congregational Administrator provides paperwork and receives the results of background checks. The Congregational Administrator keeps all records in a locked file cabinet for security and privacy.

II. Ministerial Conduct

Preparation for a Safe Church: All those in the church who engage in ministry with others may encounter individuals who are emotionally or personally vulnerable in some way. It is important that every member of the church be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others, and to understand the ways in which their actions may impact those who may be vulnerable to their use or misuse of power. This policy helps to provide that understanding.

Self-Care: It is the policy of Community Church to encourage its ministry leaders to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, boundary issues, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

III. Preparing to Work/Volunteer with Minors and/or Vulnerable Adults



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Time Requirement: All adults who work with minors and/or vulnerable adults will have been members of Community Church for at least six months, or known in the church community for at least one year, and have met the provisions of this policy. An exception to this guideline is that Authorized Ministers or seminarians may work with minors as soon as they have met the other provisions of this policy.

Live Scan Trained Adults (LSTA):

To become LSTA, staff and volunteers must complete 3 steps:

- 1. Live-Scan background check;**
- 2. Safe Church Policy Training (renew every 3 years);**
- 3. Receive certificate from online training module in Child Abuse Prevention.**

- **All paid staff** must complete the above 3-step LSTA process.
- **All volunteers who have contact with minors** will complete the above 3-step LSTA process.
- **All volunteers who do not have a Live Scan background check on file** must be accompanied by two LSTA whenever they work with children.
- **All volunteers who have ongoing contact with vulnerable adults** through the Visitation program will have a Live Scan fingerprint background check completed and attend a Safe Church Policy training.
- **All volunteers with oversight authority with children** will complete the above 3-step LSTA process.

Education and Training to the Policy: Policy training sessions will be offered annually by pastors and/or ministry leaders. Those who start their ministry between formal training sessions will have a 1:1 session with the appropriate pastor.

Policy Non-compliance Incident Log: Reasonable and unforeseen circumstances may arise that prevent us from following this Safe Church Policy. In such cases, the involved person(s) will create an entry in an Incident Log that recognizes the non-compliance and will notify the appropriate pastor of the incident. The Incident Log will be kept locked in the church office by the Congregational Administrator. When the Safe Church Policy is reviewed, the team designated by the Leadership Council to perform the review will examine the Incident Log.



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Criminal Records: Having a criminal record does not necessarily disqualify someone from ministry with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults *except* if the criminal record includes crimes against a child, vulnerable adult, or crimes of a sexual nature. If, as a result of the Live Scan background check, the pastor(s) deem it necessary, a volunteer may be refused permission to minister with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults or the pastor(s) may limit the type of work a volunteer may do.

IV. Safety Requirements when Working with Children and Youth

Two Adult Rule: Two LSTA, unrelated adults must be present during any church sponsored child or youth activity. Every adult should attempt to avoid circumstances that cause them to be alone with a child/youth. All interactions should be interruptible and observable.

Supervision: The Children's Faith Formation Action Team (ChilFFAT) and Youth Ministry Team shall provide appropriate adult-child ratios for supervision. Supervision should be maintained before and after activities until all children are in the custody of their parent, legal guardian, or their designee. For all overnight activities there must be at least two LSTAs, unrelated adults present at all times.

One-on-One Mentoring: Any volunteer working as a 1:1 Mentor to Youth must complete all steps to be an LSTA. Parents of mentored youth may be trained to Safe Church Policy, but must give permission in writing to allow for 1:1 mentoring for their child. The Mentor and parents must maintain regular contact, and 1:1 mentoring must not extend beyond the scope of the church-sponsored mentoring program.

Permission Slips & Medical Release: Written consent (in the form of a permission slip and medical release) of one parent or guardian will be required for each separate activity off the church property and all overnight activities, either on or off the church property.

Sign-ins/Sign-outs: Parents and guardians shall sign in and sign out children 5th grade and below for all church activities in which the parent/guardian drops off their child and does not stay for the activity. Parents or guardians, in direct contact with adult leaders, may give permission for siblings 6th grade and above to sign out or pick up younger siblings. Children will not be released to unauthorized adults.



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Visibility: All activities with children and youth must be conducted in a way that allows visibility—for example, glass doors, open doors, and meeting in public places that allow for observation.

Youth Working with Children: Youth under 18 may work with minors only when accompanied by or observable by two LSTA, unrelated adults who are in compliance with the Safe Church Policy.

Prevention of Child-on-Child Abuse: Children should not be sent to isolated settings (like the bathroom or an empty classroom) in pairs.

Bathroom and Diapering: Two LSTA adults must be present when clothes or diapers are changed. The parent may also be recruited to change clothes or diapers. An LSTA adult must accompany children to and from the bathroom and inform another adult when this takes place. The adult will assist the child only when necessary. The bathroom door must remain open so that children and adults assisting are within view or earshot of another volunteer.

Empty Room Check: All volunteers and staff must check the classroom or area at the end of an activity to make sure that it is empty.

Consent and Affection: We believe in consent in all forms of contact. Physical contact should usually be initiated by the child in order to guard against physical contact that is based upon the adult's emotional need. Adults will seek clear consent before engaging in any physical contact. Children learn early on what it means to give their consent—this is the basis for building healthy relationships as they grow.

Gift Giving to Children in Community Church Programs: Offering a gift to an individual child by a teacher or volunteer, at the exclusion of all other participants in the class or activity, is generally unacceptable. In cases where a child has suffered a trauma and the instructor feels a small gift or individual note will provide comfort, the parent or guardian of the child should first be contacted for permission; after which, the teacher should inform the pastor of the intent. The gift should be given in such a way that the child neither feels “singled out”, nor the child's classmates feel “left out.” It is important that all children be treated equally and all feel that they are valued participants. Therefore, on special occasions (Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc.), if a teacher or volunteer feels a gift or note is appropriate, it is common practice to give equally to each child.



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Children and Youth Discipline: Community Church encourages behavior that fosters community and is respectful of others and ourselves in all our programs. If a ministry leader working with children and/or youth feels that a minor's behavior is disruptive and/or endangers the wellbeing of self or others, that leader may return the minor to their parent or guardian (if present at the time) or may call the minor's parent or guardian so that the child may be picked up. The leaders will work with the minor and the minor's parents/guardians to allow for a safe return to the activities of the group at a future time.

Transportation of Minors: See the church's separate Transportation Policy for information on how to safely transport minors for church-sponsored activities.

General Communication Practices: Youth and children's ministry leaders should make every reasonable effort not to be alone with a minor. In rare situations, if a private conversation with a minor is needed, parental permission for the conversation should be sought prior to the conversation. Alternatives to private communication include observable public/corporate conversations and holding the minor in prayer. Occasionally an adult ministry leader may have a pre-existing relationship with a minor, perhaps through school or sports activities. Or a close relationship may develop because of church activities, such as summer camp. This mentor-type relationship may include one-to-one conversations or communications. It is incumbent on the adult in such a relationship to disclose the private aspect of the relationship to the Associate Minister of Faith Formation or equivalent position, and to obtain permission from the parents for such a relationship to continue.

Internet, Texting, Phone & Social Media Use with Minors: Any individual's use of the internet and social media from their own device is beyond the scope of this policy. Having stated that, Community Church volunteers and employees use the internet and social media platforms to further the ministry of the church. The following guidelines are included in this policy in order to make every effort possible to ensure appropriate use of the internet and social media by all employees and volunteers:

- **Photographs:** Photos of minors may be published by authorized internet and social media administrators on the church's website, FaceBook page, etc, and in brochures and other publications unless a parent/guardian submits a signed "do not publish" form naming the child whose photograph is not to be published. Any person of any age and any parent/guardian of any minor may request that a specific picture be removed from the church's website, FaceBook page, etc, and/or that a picture not be used in future publications; the church will respond to this request as quickly as possible.



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- **Inappropriate internet sites:** Any person accessing inappropriate internet sites while on church property and/or using church equipment or devices will be asked to exit the program immediately and may be barred from using church equipment/devices in the future.
- **Posting on Social Media:** Special care should be taken when posting photos, videos, etc, from church events on social media. This may be complicated when, for example, youth post about other youth on social media. Should questions arise about healthy online relationships, please consult with the clergy.
- **Adult communication with a minor via social media:** In the world of social media, healthy boundaries and safety practices must mirror the physical world. For example, a youth leader would not hold a conversation alone with a child, and should also not have a private chat online.
 - Adults who are in ministry with youth, and the youth themselves, should know that all communication sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes or posts) is not confidential and may need to be shared with appropriate persons.
 - Use an appropriate tone; friendly, but not over-familiar or personal. While communication can be warm and friendly, it should not suggest or offer a special relationship.
 - One-on-one communication is generally inappropriate and should be discouraged. But if it does occur, it should be saved in case there are misunderstandings.
 - Adults should not submit or accept “friend” requests to minors or youth.
 - Emails and texts are generally not appropriate for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged, or require extensive conversation.
 - Text or email communication should be short and should usually be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event. When possible leaders should use a group text or email that includes another adult (parent or leader).
- **Reporting Concerns about Social Media:** Any online material (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited/bullied should be immediately reported to a pastor.

V. Safety Requirements when working with Vulnerable Adults

Volunteers working with vulnerable elders must complete a Live Scan background check and are required to attend a Safe Church Policy Training.

VI. Reporting of Suspected Minor or Elder Abuse



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Mandated Reporters and Encouragement for Others to Report: The child abuse and elder abuse reporting laws in California state that Authorized Ministers are Mandated Reporters; it is the responsibility of all Authorized Ministers of Community Church to report any reasonable suspicion of child or elder abuse to the appropriate authorities. While others serving in ministry with this congregation may not be mandated reporters, the reporting laws require them to report their suspicions to the appropriate pastor(s). Any volunteer may complete a report directly with Child Protective Services or Adult Protective Services if they suspect child or elder abuse.

Definition of Reasonable Suspicion: Reasonable suspicion is based on facts, alongside a person's life experiences and training. Therefore, not all people would necessarily come to the same suspicion. We are not all expected to be experts. It is not our duty to investigate suspicions of abuse. Our duty lies in appropriately reporting so that the vulnerable will be protected. Such suspicions will be taken seriously, with due respect for the privacy and dignity of the individuals involved. All care will be taken to avoid accusatory attitudes and statements. Reminding ourselves of our duty as a community of faith, our first responsibility is to the vulnerable and to potential victims of abuse.

How to Report: When a minister or ministry volunteer develops, in the course of their ministry, a suspicion of abuse, they shall report their suspicion to one of the pastors, or in their absence (or in the case that a pastor is suspected), the Moderator, as soon as possible. The reporting individual may contact law enforcement directly if the vulnerable person's immediate safety is an issue. Once reported, the suspicion will be responded to in accordance with the Suspected Abuse Response Plan, which is found below in the **Section D. Procedural Steps**.

VII. Registered Sex Offenders

It is possible that a registered sex offender may wish to attend (and perhaps unite in membership with) Community Church. While not all registered sex offenders pose a risk to others, Community Church has decided to err on the side of safety and to protect the most vulnerable in our community of faith. Therefore, we establish these guidelines:

- All registered sex offenders are required to make that status known to the Lead Minister of Community Church. This information is not confidential and will be shared by the pastor with anyone they deem necessary, including but not limited to the Associate Ministers, Moderator, Vice Moderator, and Congregational Administrator.



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- Anyone who is a registered sex offender will always be in the company of a Companion Adult (see Definition of Terms, Section C) while on the property of Community Church or while attending an event sponsored by Community Church or while representing our church in any capacity. It is the responsibility of the registered sex offender to schedule the presence of a Companion Adult when needed.
- Registered sex offenders may not work in any volunteer or paid capacity with our children and youth ministry programs.
- A person convicted of committing a crime against children may, by decision of the pastors or vote of the Leadership Council, be banned from participating in any church activity at which children may be present, including worship services.

VIII. Follow-up for those Non-compliant with the Policy

Failure to follow the Safe Church policy will result in church leaders (pastor(s) or the Moderator) counseling, correcting, and mentoring the involved individual. Actions taken and any verbal and/or written notices given will be documented. If the corrective action plan is unsuccessful, termination of employment, or volunteer status may result. A person who reports suspected abuse and where there appears to be a conflict of interest, will not be allowed to lead an investigation or possible disciplinary process. Mandated reporters must follow state law regarding reporting, whether there appears to be a conflict of interest or not.

IX. Updating this Policy and Continuing Education

This policy may be amended and/or updated by the Leadership Council as needed, and should be reviewed by an ad-hoc team designated by the Leadership Council at least every three years. As part of the review, the ad-hoc team will include an examination of the Incident Log (which notes the instances when we have been unable to comply with the Safe Church Policy), and will evaluate the entire Safe Church Policy. The Leadership Council may delegate a team to continue educating the congregation around issues of abuse, vulnerability, power relationships, and healthy relationship boundaries.

C. Other Considerations: Values, Goals, and Definitions of Terms

Values that Guide Us

An abundant welcome and hospitality in a safe and secure environment:



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As a church and as a denomination we subscribe to being the place where anyone can find an “abundant welcome” without regard to any factor in a person’s life. We want to make our church home a place of joy as we deepen our faith together and become a church family. We understand our church holds a unique place in our community as a place where multigenerational interactions provide stability over decades. So, we promote intergenerational communication and support in order to buttress this growth. We also understand that everyone needs care. We seek to reach out in loving relationships. Because our hospitality includes providing for safety for all within the church environment, our welcome uses particular care when it extends to those who are vulnerable. This policy addresses safeguards and methods to protect those in our midst who are vulnerable, because we value every person in our midst. Part of our role is to be mindful of both the needs of vulnerable individuals and the power differences that exist between leaders and vulnerable individuals.

Goals

A safe and secure environment during church activities: The Community Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, adults, staff, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. In keeping with the covenant of baptism, we commit ourselves and our resources to the nurture, care, and protection of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This policy reflects our commitment to preserve this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others. We pledge to intentionally provide the structure, education, and policies that will keep them safe from harm and abuse.

A safe and secure environment in the wider community: We, as a community of faith, acknowledge the right of all persons to live in a safe environment in the community as well as at church. Should we become aware of any violation of this right in the form of domestic violence or physical abuse in the home environment, a sensitive and respectful response is necessary. The appropriate pastor should be informed and a decision may have to be made to involve outside agencies such as Child Protective Services, law enforcement, or public social services. The church community should be made aware that they can confidentially approach the pastors and need not be embarrassed or afraid; concerns will be treated seriously and appropriately.

Definitions of Terms used in the Safe Church Policy



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(in alphabetical order)

Authorized Minister, Pastor, or Clergy (used interchangeably): A person who holds ordained ministerial standing (or has been commissioned or licensed by an Association of the United Church of Christ).

Bullying: Seeking to harm, intimidate, isolate, or coerce someone who is perceived as vulnerable.

Child Abuse: When a child is injured physically, sexually, emotionally, or through neglect, including but not limited to the following examples:

- Physical abuse is an injury that is inflicted by other than accidental means on a child by another person (e.g. injuring a child by hitting, shaking, biting, or throwing objects);
- Sexual abuse is an act of sexual assault on and the sexual exploitation of children (e.g. sexual contact with a minor or the use of children in sexual films or pictures);
- Emotional abuse is an attack on a child's emotional and social development (e.g. belittling, threatening, yelling at, humiliating, ignoring, blaming or otherwise emotionally mistreating a child);
- Neglect is the failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, nurture, and/or supervision.

Companion Adult: An adult who does not have any criminal convictions and who has been approved by the Lead Minister to fill this ministry. A Companion Adult will accompany a registered sex offender while on the property of Community Church, or while attending an event sponsored by Community Church, or while representing Community Church.

Consent: Consent is the practice of relating to others with the understanding that everyone has ownership of their own body and the right to choose how their body is engaged with by others. A culture of consent supports the development of each person's felt sense of their body's needs, wants, desires and boundaries. Consent seeks to honor this inner voice and understanding across all ages by recognizing and discussing feelings, asking permission before acting where appropriate, and does not assume anyone is okay with an action or way of engaging. Consent honors that no means no, and recognizes that a clear yes cannot always be given, especially where there are power differences present. In order for someone to give a true yes, consent must be freely given, able to be reversed, informed, enthusiastic and specific. For more information about "Consent," visit Planned Parenthood's website:

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/relationships/sexual-consent>



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Elder Abuse: Any physical abuse, neglect, financial abuse, abandonment, isolation, abduction, or other treatment resulting in physical harm or pain or mental suffering of a vulnerable or elderly person.

- Abandonment: The desertion of an elder by someone who is a caregiver.
- Abduction: The removal, without the consent of the conservator, of a conservatee to another state.
- Financial Abuse: The illegal or unethical exploitation and/or use of an elder's funds, property, or other assets.
- Isolation: the intentional preventing of an elder from receiving mail, telephone calls, or visitors.
- Mental Suffering: The infliction of fear, agitation, confusion through threats, harassment or other forms of intimidating behavior.
- Physical Abuse: The infliction of physical pain or injury, sexual assault or molestation, or use of physical or chemical restraints without or beyond the scope of a doctor's order.
- Neglect: The failure to fulfill a caretaking obligation such as assisting in personal hygiene, providing food, clothing or shelter, protecting a person from health and safety hazards, or preventing malnutrition.
- Self-neglect: Harm or endangerment which derives from an inability to understand the consequences of one's own actions or inactions.

Live Scan Trained Adult (LSTA): An adult who has completed Live Scan fingerprinting, Safe Church Policy Training, and the online module on Child Abuse Prevention.

Mandated Reporter: Mandated Reporters (i.e. clergy, teachers, health care professionals, child care workers, social workers, police) are required by the State of California to report any known or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to the county child welfare department or to a local law enforcement agency (local police/sheriff's department).

Ministerial Relationship: The relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

Ministry Leader: Leaders refer to both clergy and ministry volunteers.

Ministry Volunteer: For the purposes of this policy, a ministry volunteer is an adult engaged in ministry with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.



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Minor: As used in these policies, the term “minor” means any child or youth living at home who has not graduated from high school. This may include youth who are 18. The terms “child” and “youth” are used more loosely—“youth” generally means someone in Middle School or High School; “child” generally means those who are 5th grade or younger.

Sexual Exploitation: Sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister (as defined above) engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.

Sexual Harassment: Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person which might cause intimidation, humiliation, or embarrassment to the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

Sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, email, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, or sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another’s body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another’s body, gesturing, or displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person’s job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the



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church. It is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition, or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluation, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendation or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

Social Media: Any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to social networks, blogs, web sites, forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, FaceBook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, Instagram, Snap Chat, and Flickr.

Vulnerable Adult: Any adult over the age of 18 who is physically and/or mentally disabled and participates in a situation where they could be taken advantage of physically, emotionally, and/or sexually.

Vulnerable Adult Abuse: A knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult.

Vulnerable Persons: Any person who is at risk of abuse or harm due to life circumstances, including children, youth, and elders. Vulnerable adults include people who are homeless (especially those homeless persons who are elderly, ill or disabled), mentally ill, mentally handicapped, physically handicapped, frail, and/or elderly people.

D. Procedural Steps:

Suspected Abuse Response Plan:

- The clergy or Moderator has the responsibility to take appropriate action, and monitor the situation until it is resolved.
- If a child or vulnerable adult is in pain, injured, or appears injured, call 911.
- The clergy (or in the absence of clergy, the Moderator) will contact the appropriate governmental agencies (i.e., Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, a police department) and make verbal and written reports of the suspected abuse. The police department will always be contacted if there is a suspicion that a child or elder is in immediate danger.



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- In a case of suspected child abuse, when a parent/guardian is not suspected of committing the abuse, the clergy (or in the absence of clergy, the Moderator) will notify the child's parent(s)/guardian(s).
- In a case where the person suspected of abusing another may have done so on church property and/or in conjunction with a ministry of the church, the clergy (or in the absence of clergy, the Moderator) will contact the church's insurance company, legal counsel, and the appropriate member of the Northern California-Nevada Conference staff.
- Additionally, the person suspected of abusing another may be
 - Called upon for a conference with the clergy,
 - Reported to the proper authorities,
 - Removed from working with children and youth,
 - Asked to remain off church property and away from church activities while the suspicion is being investigated by the authorities.
- All members and friends of Community Church will cooperate fully with civil authorities under the guidance of an attorney, which will be retained on an as-needed basis.
- If requested, the clergy (or in the absence of clergy, the Moderator) will take steps to protect, to the best of their ability, the anonymity of the person who brings the suspected abuse to the clergy or Moderator's attention.
- The Leadership Council will authorize the clergy or a Leadership Council appointee to act as the official spokesperson for the congregation. Only the authorized person or persons may speak for the congregation to the news media.