

Saint Luke's Presbyterian Church
Dunwoody, Georgia
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
Adopted by Session, August 17th, 2025

As members of this congregation and of the Body of Christ, we covenant to undertake the Christian nurture of each individual. Our commitment to nurture means that we will help care for all people by providing them with a safe environment, as well as teaching them the gospel and living out the faith as positive role models. In keeping with that covenant, this policy also provides adults with clear guidelines for working with and caring for children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Policy:

1. Children and youth are defined as people from birth to 18 years of age. Youth who serve as volunteers with children will receive child and youth protection training.
2. Vulnerable adults are defined as adults who are unable to protect themselves from harm, abuse, or exploitation due to various factors, like physical or mental limitations, age, or disability
3. No person with substantiated incidents of physical or sexual child abuse, exploitation, or other forms of sexual misconduct will be allowed to work or volunteer in any position involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
4. Employees and volunteers working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be **required** to receive protection training.
5. Employees and volunteers working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be subject to background and/or driver's license checks, procedures for which will be provided.
6. The following behaviors by any employee or volunteer are prohibited:
 - a. Physical striking, hitting, or spanking a child or youth.
 - b. Touching inappropriately or sexually, consensual or otherwise.
 - c. Verbally or emotionally abusing a child or youth, including the use of sexual innuendos.
7. At least two (non-spousal) adult workers **must be present** at all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults in physical and virtual spaces. At no time will only one worker be allowed to be alone with a child, youth or vulnerable adult. The only exceptions to the two-adult rule would be situations in which the adult and child or youth are in a public place or other highly visible or highly trafficked areas. In such cases, classroom doors shall remain open. The policy is not intended to restrict appropriate pastoral counseling and caregiving.

8. No adult volunteers are allowed to share sleeping spaces or bathroom spaces with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult that they are not related to, unless a medical supervision is required overnight, and in this situation, the two-adult rule comes into effect along with detailed doctor instructions.
9. Adult workers will communicate appropriately online with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
 - A. The two-person rule applies; all private online communication between a child, youth, or vulnerable adult and an adult must include two adults, preferably one being a staff member or parent.
 - B. Emailing and/or texting with children, youth, or vulnerable adult about anything beyond matters related to the church should be avoided and should be brought to the attention of staff immediately.
 - C. Keep in mind that the best way to communicate is through email or group pages set up by the church
10. Adult workers will maintain appropriate boundaries on social media.
 - a. Adults **shall not** initiate a friend or follow request with children, youth, or vulnerable adults on any social media platform. If a child, youth, or vulnerable adult sends an adult a friend request or requests to follow the adult, the adult will discuss with their child's parents/adult's guardians and discern for themselves the level of contact they wish to have.
 - b. Adults who are connected to youth on social media must agree to refrain from posting any inappropriate content as implied by our policy and at the discretion of church leadership.
 - c. On their personal social media pages/accounts, adults will not tag or otherwise identify children, youth, and vulnerable individuals in photos posted online of church related activities/events.

I understand that, under Georgia State Law, I am a mandatory reporter, and will report suspected abuse and/or neglect within 24 hours to Child and Family Services and notify a program staff member of Saint Luke's.

Once a program staff member has been notified, the following procedure will be followed:

- A. The staff member and the person reporting will complete an incident report.
- B. The Pastor/Head of Staff will be notified.
- C. The Pastor and appropriate staff member will document all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident.

- D. If the incident took place during a church function, the Pastor and/or appropriate staff member will notify the parent/guardian of the suspected victim as soon as possible of the incident.
 - E. Only the appropriate law enforcement authorities will carry out an in-depth investigation. In cases where a member of the employed church staff is accused, the Rules of Discipline of the PCUSA shall also apply.
 - F. The church will minister, as much as possible, to individuals who in good faith make reports of actual or reasonably suspected cases of abuse, to those who are accused, and to those who are abused. All reports will be taken seriously, but not judged prematurely.
 - G. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities until the investigation is completed and allegations are cleared by authorities.
 - H. To the extent possible, confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded.
- Agreement to Serve: I have received, read, and understand the Saint Luke's Presbyterian Church Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and agree to abide by it. I agree to observe all policies and procedures regarding working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Furthermore, I have never been convicted of any physical/sexual abuse crime. I have never been nor am I currently involved in any abuse as described above.

Agreement to Serve:

I have received, read, and understand the Saint Luke's Presbyterian Church Children and Youth Protection Policy and agree to abide by it. I agree to observe all policies and procedures regarding working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Furthermore, I have never been convicted of any sexual/physical abuse crimes. I have never been nor am I currently involved in any abuse of a minor as described above