

# SAFE CHURCH:

AN ABUSE PREVENTION PLAN

OF

CADILLAC CHRISTIAN  
REFORMED CHURCH

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## ABUSE PREVENTION PLAN – CADILLAC CRC

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## I. Introduction

It is the mission of Cadillac Christian Reformed Church (CCRC) to provide a caring and loving environment for people to worship God, engage in ministry activities, and grow spiritually. For this to be accomplished, it is important to have and implement a plan that will promote a safe environment and help prevent potential abuse for everyone while participating in the life of our church. This document defines our policies and guidelines, which are formulated from recommendations of the Christian Reformed Church of North America and the Safe Church Team of our classis. It is the responsibility of the CCRC Council and the ministry leaders to ensure that this plan is implemented and followed.

## II. Philosophy

Abuse is a violation of persons through a manipulative use of power and control for selfish purposes. It is so unacceptable in Christ's Kingdom that it elicited some of the most severe words that Jesus ever spoke (Mark 9:42). Statistics and stories reveal the real presence of abuse in churches with devastating results to children, adults and to the entire church body's reputation. A 1992 survey by the CRCNA indicated that the frequency of child abuse within the Christian community is like its occurrence in the general population. The results clearly indicated that children and adults in churches can be abused. The report called upon the church "to publicly acknowledge that the sin of abuse be addressed promptly so that abused and abusers may experience the healing power of God's grace." It also urged churches "to take positive steps to make their congregations safe for all persons" (Acts of Synod 1992, p. 673).

## III. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish healthy boundaries within our church ministries that will:

- ensure the well being of all God's children whether child or adult, while participating in activities of CCRC because acts of abuse can result in devastating and long-term consequences.
- protect volunteers and staff during church activities in which allegations of abuse might arise that could result in damage to their reputations.
- discourage potential offenders from gaining access to victims and discourage situations that are ripe for abuse or may lead to an inappropriate relationship.
- protect the reputation of our church and limit its liability.

## IV. Definitions

- *Adults*: individuals 18 years or older
- *Children or minors*: individuals under 18 years of age
- *Volunteers*: Adults who serve without compensation in a church program and provide care or supervision of minors or adults.
- *Staff*: Adults who are compensated to serve in a church program and provide care and supervision of minors or adults.
- *Helpers*: Minors, ages 10 to 17, who serve in a child or youth program without compensation.
- *Cadillac Christian Reformed Church Council*: Elders and deacons who provide oversight of the church by its articles of election, incorporation, and bylaws. Council usually serves a term of office and may be reappointed.
- *Abuse*: Harm or threatened harm to a child's or adult's health and well-being. Abuse includes non-accidental physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect.

- *Physical Abuse:* Any non-accidental human act that results in physical pain or injury to an adult or child, whether or not it leaves a cut or wound, a mark or a bruise. Physical abuse behavior ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, and biting to more severe forms of abuse such as choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing, and shooting.
- *Emotional Abuse:* Attempts to control a child's or adult's life through words, threats, and fear, or to destroy a person's self-worth through humiliation, degradation, and deprivation. Emotional abuse weakens a person's mental and physical ability to resist the offender, cuts off his or her contacts with others, and causes gradual loss of self-esteem of the victim – all of which reinforces a sense of helplessness and dependence on the abuser.
- *Sexual Abuse:* The exploitation of a child or adult or any sexual intimacy forced for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person who is responsible for their care or supervision. Sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a child who is not able to understand sexual acts or to resist coercion such as threats or the offer of gifts. Sexual abuse may or may not involve physical contact. Examples of *non-contact* sexual abuse include displaying pornographic material, photographing a child for pornographic purposes, making obscene telephone calls, and requesting someone to engage in sexual activity where no physical contact occurs. Examples of contact sexual abuse include prolonged hugging and kissing a child; fondling of breasts, genitals, buttocks; sexual intercourse; oral and anal sex.
- *Neglect:* Failure to meet the physical needs of a child for whom a person is responsible. Typically, physical needs include adequate food, shelter, clothing or medical care. Neglect includes placing a child at an unreasonable risk to their health or welfare by failure of the person responsible for their health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when he/she is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk.

## **V. Policies – Children/Youth Programs**

### **A. General Policy and Guidelines**

1. Use a team approach by following the Two-Adult Rule.
  - a. Two approved adult volunteers (preferably unrelated) will be present during any church program involving children/youth.
  - b. A third, unrelated volunteer or helper should be present when married couples serve together in a room.
  - c. Approved helpers (ages 10-17) may assist in programs with adult supervision but may not substitute for the leadership of an adult.
  - d. When a helper is present, she or he should be at least four years older than the oldest child in the room.
2. All adult volunteers and staff should have completed the screening application, signed the code of ethics [see Appendix 7], received training information regarding their areas of ministry, received a copy of this document, and been advised of the information therein.
3. All minor helpers should have completed the screening application and the Safe Church summary document provided for minors. They should also have received training regarding their area of ministry.
4. A registration/consent form including medical information must be on file with the program director for all students attending children/youth ministry programs or services. [see Appendix 5]

5. When children's programs are in session, the meeting room doors should allow for unobstructed views of the room.
6. Adult volunteers may take children from the classroom only for a compelling reason, such as an emergency or illness.
7. Bathroom assistance and monitoring:
  - a. Children should be encouraged to use the bathroom before the session begins.
  - b. If a child needs bathroom assistance during the program session, an adult volunteer may assist the child with the bathroom door ajar.
  - c. For children under age 5 not needing assistance or elementary age children, the adult should remain outside the bathroom monitoring from the hallway.
8. The Discipline [section V.C. page 6] and High-Risk section [V.D. page 7] of this policy applies to all programs and all locations of Children & Youth church ministry.
9. Volunteers and staff should identify, and address bullying behavior observed in their programs and provide training about the topic for the students. [See appendix 4]
10. Displays of affection:
  - a. Displays of affection toward children should be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-hand pat on the back, a handclasp, a high-five, or a light touch to the forearm.
  - b. Volunteers, staff, helpers, and children should respect the other person's right to refuse a display of affection.
  - c. One child should not be singled out for affection.
  - d. Affection should not occur in private settings or isolated contexts.
  - e. Displays of affection should not be encouraged in a group context that may intimidate, manipulate, or frighten a child.
11. A release shall be obtained for the publishing of any photo or video of a minor child/youth by CCRC staff or volunteers. The release shall be signed by the minor's parent or legal guardian. The release will contain two levels of permission: 1) to give permission to publish an image of the minor, 2) to allow the minor in the photo to be identified. [See Appendix 5]
12. Staff or volunteers must fill out an incident report when a child has had an accident/illness/incident while they were under their care. [See Appendix 1]
13. The doors to each classroom shall be kept locked when not in use to discourage inappropriate activity.
14. Use of the facilities of CCRC by private parties should also conform to the guidelines.
15. Refer to the following sections for program/age specific policies and guidelines that also apply.

## **B. Age Specific Guidelines**

### **1. Infant and Nursery Programs**

- a. Subject to the Two-Adult Rule, the suggested ratio of volunteer/helper to infant/toddler is one adult should be present for every four infants. One adult or helper should be present for every four toddlers.
- b. Use a check-in system that provides a list of the children, parent/guardian authorized to pick up the child, and contact information.
- c. Only an adult attendant should diaper a child/infant when necessary.
- d. Also see Children & Youth Programs-General Policy and Guidelines. [page 4]

### **2. Preschool Programs**

- a. Subject to the Two-Adult Rule, the recommended ratio of adults to preschool children is two to ten.

- b. Use a check-in system that provides a list of the children, parent/guardian authorized to pick up the child, and contact information.
- c. Also see Children & Youth Programs-General Policy and Guidelines. [page 4]

### **3. Elementary Programs**

- a. Subject to the Two-Adult Rule, the recommended ratio is one to ten; some activities may require additional volunteers or helpers.
- b. Use a check-in system that provides a list of the children, parent/guardian authorized to pick up the child, and contact information.
- c. Also see Children & Youth Programs-General Policy and Guidelines. [page 4]

### **4. Middle & High School Programs**

- a. Subject to the Two-Adult Rule, at least two volunteers/staff should supervise activities. There should be sufficient supervision for all activities.
- c. It is never appropriate for a volunteer/staff person to date a participant in the program or a friend of a participant in the program.
- d. Volunteers/staff and teens should not exchange gifts, phone calls, letters, e-mails, text messages, or any other form of communication that is perceived as intimate in nature. All communications with minors should be considered subject to parental and church oversight.
- e. Volunteers/staff who consume alcohol or use illegal drugs in the presence of teens or offer any of the same to minors shall be subject to discipline and will be reported to the civil authorities.
- f. Minors that consume alcohol or use illegal drugs during scheduled activities will be dismissed from the program and may be reported to the civil authorities.
- g. Also see Children & Youth Programs-General Policy and Guidelines. [page 4]

## **C. Discipline Policy – Children/Youth**

- 1. There will be no corporal punishment (spanking, slapping, hitting, kicking, punching, etc) used as a form of discipline.
- 2. There will be no harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or other verbal humiliations directed toward children and youth.
- 3. Staff should inform the parent(s) whenever a child or teen misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehavior becomes apparent.
- 4. Staff members and volunteers should report to the program director all concerns about a child's or teen's unacceptable behavior, as well as the response taken to deal with the behavior.
- 5. An additional volunteer or a parent should be present for meetings or activities in which misbehavior is an ongoing problem.
- 6. Expectations for the behavior of children and youth should reflect their age and level of comprehension.
- 7. Staff and volunteers should regularly remind children of the behavior that is acceptable for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.
- 8. Discipline measures should be appropriate to the age comprehension abilities of the children and youth involved. When using timeouts with younger children, the time period should not last longer [in minutes] than the age of the child. For example, a three-year-old should not have to sit for a timeout any longer than three minutes.
- 9. Volunteers and staff should avoid physical contact for discipline of a child or teen. Some ways to do this include:
  - a. Distracting the child or youth with another activity.

- b. Helping the child or youth focus on more acceptable behavior.
  - c. Removing the child or youth from others if another volunteer or staff is available to assist.
  - d. Staff or volunteers should immediately remove a child or teen who assaults, harasses, or bullies another person. The bullying child or teen may be reinstated in the group when the risk to others has been adequately reduced. [See Appendix 4]
10. New volunteers and staff members will be trained by the program director on the use of appropriate discipline measures. Existing staff and volunteers should receive yearly reminders.
11. Helpers are not to administer discipline.

#### **D. High Risk Situations – Children/Youth**

The church recognizes the need to provide for the welfare and safety of staff and adult volunteers. It also wants to ensure the protection of children and youth. To accomplish these goals, higher-risk situations are identified, as well as the steps that will be taken to provide supervision of staff and volunteers and ensure protection of children and youth.

##### **High risk situations:**

- Transporting children.
- Off-Site Events.
- One to One Meetings between child and adult.
- Children/Youth on-site with no assigned supervision.

##### **1. Transportation**

- a. Volunteers and staff who drive to transport children or youth, must be 21 years of age, have a valid driver's license, proof of insurance, no drug or alcohol convictions of any kind within the last 10 years, and less than 4 points on his/her driving record. Those who transport children or youth will attest to their eligibility to do so, according to these requirements, when they sign the Safe Church Application.
- b. The driver is responsible to inform the ministry leader/supervisor immediately if they are no longer eligible to drive according to these requirements. The ministry leader/supervisor must inform the office administrator for changing the record.
- c. Permission forms must be completed for children under age 18 by the parent or guardian for transportation that is arranged by CCRC for an event/program. The completed form (or a copy of it) must be carried in the vehicle during transporting of the students. [See appendix 5]
- d. When transporting children and youth the Two-Person rule is the best practice.
  - Two volunteers or staff persons will be present and seated in the front seat of the vehicle, AND
  - At least two youth must be present in the vehicle; or a youth being transported alone must sit in the back seat.
- e. If it is not possible to follow the Two-Person rule, the volunteer or staff should notify the program supervisor, by phone, text, or e-mail, stating the date, time, expected return time, and location of the event along with the names of the individuals involved. The program supervisor will log these messages and submit this log to the next scheduled elders' meeting.
- f. Volunteers and staff must ensure that all occupants of the vehicle abide by state requirements for car seat use, seatbelt use, and air bag safety:
  - Children and youth must wear seatbelts when being transported.

- Volunteers and staff will not transport more children than there are available seatbelts.
  - Michigan state law requires that children under age 8 and under 4'9" (57") must be properly restrained in a car seat or booster seat. Children who are under age 8 but taller than 4'9" (57") may use the vehicle seat belt.
  - Children under the age of ten may not sit in the front seat if there is a passenger-side airbag installed in the vehicle.
- e. Transportation of a minor to a CCRC program by CCRC staff or a volunteer of that program is considered to be arranged by CCRC and is subject to this Transportation Policy.
- f. Transportation to or from events or programs of CCRC that is not arranged by CCRC and not provided by its staff or volunteers, is not subject to this policy. However:
- obtaining signed permission to transport is recommended, and
  - as the contact with the child's family, obtaining signed permission for the child to attend events of the program may become the transporter's responsibility.

## **2. Off-Site Programs for Children and Teens**

- a. Staffing:
- For off-site activities, the number and ratio of volunteers/staff should be greater than that recommended for on-site programs at each age level. A minimum of two volunteer/staff persons and one helper [at least 4 years older than the oldest child participant] should supervise, adding more adults and helpers as needed.
  - A minimum of two adult volunteers will remain in attendance at all overnight events with at least one adult per room in sleeping arrangements. One adult, one child sleeping arrangements are prohibited, including sharing a bed, even if in a room with other people present.
- b. Permission:
- Parent(s) or guardian(s) must be notified of each off-site event including who the supervising adults will be.
  - Written consent should be received from parent or guardian for children (ages 5-17) to participate in each off-site event. [See appendix 5]
  - A log must be kept and attached to a report to the next scheduled elders meeting.
- c. Special Considerations
- Activities off-site should adhere to the same safety guidelines as activities held on-site. [See section V. A. through V.C. beginning on page 4]
  - Cadillac CRC carries liability insurance coverage for all persons attending our programs whether on- or off-site.
  - Children attending off-site programs should be able to use bathroom facilities without assistance. If a child needs assistance, the parents should develop an assistance plan with the volunteer/staff person.
  - Parents must be notified by a volunteer/staff person if a child's or teen's behavior warrants removal from an off-site program. A volunteer/staff person must be present with the child/teen until the parent arrives to pick them up.
- d. Transportation
- Transportation to and from an off-site program by volunteers/staff should follow the Transportation Policy in this plan. [See page 7]
  - Children should not leave the program site unless accompanied by
    - a parent, or

- a volunteer, staff member, or other adult who are in possession of signed permission from the child's parent/guardian to transport the minor from the site.

### **3. One to One Meetings Between Child and Adult**

- a. Volunteers should not meet frequently or have lengthy private meetings with children.
- b. Volunteers or staff who need to meet with just one child/teen need to have a written supervision plan approved by their supervisor and the child's parent or guardian.
  - A log of such meetings must be kept by the program supervisor and attached to a report presented to the next scheduled elders meeting.
  - The meeting must be at the church when other staff or volunteers who have knowledge of the meeting are present in the building or, only if necessary, in an alternate public place.
  - The meetings should continue no more than once per week for a maximum of six weeks.
- c. Volunteers/staff are discouraged from meeting alone off-site with a child/teen.
- d. Volunteers/staff should never meet alone with a child/teen in a residence.
- e. Helpers should not meet privately with a child in the facility or off-site.

### **4. Children/Youth On-Site with No Assigned Supervision**

- a. Identify these meetings and events, such as Congregational meetings and fellowship time.
- b. All adults of the congregation are encouraged to corporately care for the children.
- c. The leader(s) in charge of an event or meeting that does not have assigned nursery attendants are encouraged to assign monitors.

## **VI. Policy and Guidelines for Adult Ministries**

1. All staff and volunteers should have completed the appropriate screening application, received training information regarding their areas of ministry, and been advised of the information in the Safe Church Policy.
2. Counseling or mentoring by staff, ministry leaders, or mentoring volunteers shall be arranged to occur in a formal setting (church office, conference room, or public place) which provides for both confidentiality and accountability.
3. Particular care and caution should be observed when counseling occurs between members of opposite sex.
4. Pastoral counseling that extends beyond six sessions must have written approval in advance by the Elders. Mentoring that extends beyond six sessions must have written approval in advance by the program director.
5. Content of all counseling by staff and ministry leaders shall be confidential except for information regarding the abuse of a minor, suicide, or homicide. Michigan law requires reporting information of this nature to authorities.
6. Home visits made to persons, whether a single adult or someone whose spouse is absent, should always be made by at least two persons, one of whom is at least one of the same gender as the person being visited.
7. Displays of affection should be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-hand pat on the back, a handclasp, a high-five, or a light touch to the forearm.
8. Staff and volunteers should not give or receive gifts, phone calls, letters, e-mails, text messages, or any other form of communication that is perceived as intimate in nature. All communication regarding this issue should be considered subject to church oversight.

## VII. Reporting Suspected Abuse

All staff and volunteers should be watchful for signs and symptoms of abuse and should *always* respond when a minor or an adult reports abuse.

### A. Reporting Suspected Abuse of a Minor

When staff or volunteers observe an abusive incident, notice signs or symptoms of abuse, or receive a minor's report of abuse they should follow the following reporting procedure.

1. When a staff member or volunteer observes signs or symptoms of possible abuse [See appendix 8], that person may talk with the minor about what she/he has noticed. [See appendix 9]
2. A report is written which includes the noted signs or symptoms observed, summarizes the conversation, noted bruises or injuries, if medical treatment seems advisable, and how the minor said the incident occurred and shared with the program director.
3. Unless the incident of abuse is observed and immediate intervention is necessary, DO NOT confront the alleged perpetrator.
4. When an incident of abuse **is observed** at a church function, immediately intervene to assist the child. Always write an incident report [see appendix 1] and report the alleged abuse to the civil authorities.
5. Proper civil authorities - Child Protective Services at 855-444-3911 must be contacted immediately to prevent the possibility of continued risk to the minor.
6. Mandatory Reporters are required to report any reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect. They include teachers, social workers, daycare providers, law enforcement, medical personnel, counselors, and clergy.
7. After reporting to CPS, immediately report the incident of abuse or suspected abuse to the program coordinator and to a Safe Church Team member [see appendix 10] who will share it with the pastor or council chair as determined appropriate. DO NOT attempt to conduct an investigation.
8. Mandated reporters must follow their report to CPS with a written report including Form 3200. A copy of this report should also be given to the Safe Church Team member. [Form 3200 – see appendix 11]
9. When a staff or volunteer is uncertain about making a report to the civil authorities, contacting a member of the CCRC Safe Team is recommended. [See appendix 10] This contact should happen as soon as possible – within 24 hours of an incident of suspicion of abuse. After talking with a Church Safe Team representative, if the volunteer or staff with first-hand information believes there is a suspicion of abuse, he or she is responsible to report the matter immediately to Child Protective Services (855-444-3911) following Items 5-8 above.
10. If the alleged incident occurred during a church function or involved church staff/volunteers, the Safe Church Team Member(s) will work with the CCRC church council to consult with the church attorney, and insurance company. The council will also consult with the denominational Safe Church Office for support in the process or support for the families involved in the incident if needed. Do not try to handle this without outside professional assistance. [See appendix 10]
11. Only after the church council knows that the parents of any minor involved have been contacted by the civil authorities is it appropriate for a church council representative to call them. (Provided the parents are not suspected of any involvement in the abuse.)

### B. Reporting Abuse/Professional Misconduct against an Adult

When staff or volunteers observe an abusive incident, notice signs or symptoms of abuse, or receive a firsthand report of abuse/professional misconduct against an adult they should

respond with love and empathy always allowing and encouraging the claimant (alleged adult victim) to take steps toward justice and healing.

1. When a staff member or volunteer observes signs or symptoms of possible abuse, that person may talk with the adult about what she/he has noticed.
2. Unless the incident of abuse is observed and immediate intervention is necessary, DO NOT confront the alleged offender.
3. Assist the claimant by offering contact resources for them to report the incident and receive support. (See Appendix 10)
4. Assist the claimant to contact a Cadillac CRC Safe Church Team member for support in receiving justice and for information on the denomination's hearing panel process. [See Appendix 10]
5. The Safe Church Team member will assist the claimant in contacting a member of the church council and the Safe Church Ministry Office of the CRCNA. If the alleged offender is church staff or in a leadership position in the church, or if the incident occurred in the context of a church function, this is especially important. [See appendix 10]
6. Our church council will work with the Safe Church Team Member to consult with our church attorney and insurance company if the alleged incident occurred during a CCRC function or involved CCRC staff/volunteers. Also, to consult with the denominational Safe Church Ministry Office for information and support regarding the next steps. [See appendix 10]
7. Special consideration is given to Friendship Ministries, the elderly, and any other vulnerable adults. Please refer to and follow the guidelines for reporting found in Appendix 3 – Guidelines for Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Friendship Ministries Programs for these special populations.

## **VIII. Responding Policy**

The CCRC's response to abuse should be based on the following principles:

1. Immediately take a proactive approach for the protection (both physical and emotional) of the claimant AND any potential victims.
2. Immediately inform and cooperate fully with civil authorities in the investigation.
3. Provide for (at least temporary) suspension of the alleged perpetrator from any position that allows for any potential further victimization or contact with the claimant.
4. Provide resources and support for the healing of any damage caused by the abuse/allegation and take appropriate action to prevent any opportunity for abuse to occur in the future.
5. The church's staff and council shall be responsible to act immediately to implement the above principles. Recognizing that no policy can be written to cover all abuse scenarios, those responding are encouraged to consult expert advice regarding how to best proceed to meet the above principles. (See Preventing Child Abuse by Beth Swagman – a copy is available in the church library and office. [See Appendix 10])

## **IX. Administration of this Policy**

### **A. Screening Policy**

1. All staff and volunteers that are involved in the supervision, care, or instruction of minors must complete an application form including references. The church uses this information to help ensure a safe and secure environment for children and adults who participate in its programs and use its facilities. The person who supervises the program will review the application.
2. All staff and volunteers, who are involved in supervision, care, or instruction of minors must give consent to undergo a criminal records check. The information includes full

name, date of birth, maiden names, and aliases used. The applicant will give the form with this confidential information directly to the CCRC office administrator. A driver's license number and social security number may be required if further identification is necessary.

3. All program directors including staff and volunteers will ensure that their volunteers are screened, including interview and the signing of the Code of Ethics [see appendix 7]. The program director will give the signed Code of Ethics to the Office Administrator to be filed with the signer's Safe Church application
4. CCRC will conduct the criminal records check at least once every five years.
5. Interviews are required for paid positions, and for volunteer positions with supervisory responsibilities. They are also required for any applicant whose position will include time alone with children or youth such as a youth counselor, coach, or mentor. A personal interview utilizing the prescribed protocol will be conducted by at least two persons designated by council. [See appendix 12]
6. Anyone accepted for a volunteer position will be a member, or applying for membership of the church, or attending for a period of at least six months. Certain positions require Professing Membership. Membership requirements will be evident in the job description of each position.
7. At least three references will be checked, including a contact with a previous church, for staff and volunteers who are providing care, instruction, or supervision of minors or adults. This will be done by the program supervisor/director or the hiring committee. [see Appendix 6]
8. Anyone (staff or volunteer) who has frequent or long-term one-to-one contact with minors should be fingerprinted. This includes applicants who have lived at any time during adulthood in more than two states.
9. CCRC reserves the right to reject any applicant for any reason including prior criminal convictions.
10. Once an applicant is approved for child/youth ministry he/she will receive training and be required to sign a code of ethics. [See appendix 7]

## **B. Training**

1. CCRC's Safe Church Team will ensure the readiness of staff or volunteer program directors to train their volunteers on an annual basis by providing training materials and resources on abuse prevention.
2. Training and materials on abuse prevention will be offered annually to council by the Safe Church Team.
3. Circle of Grace from Dove's Nest is the recommended resource for this training. Go to <http://dovesnest.net/Circle-of-Grace-25-minute-video> for information and training tips to use with this 25 minute video on training of staff and volunteers  
<https://dovesnest.net/cogtv25>.
4. Program directors will offer age-appropriate training for the children and youth in our ministries annually covering topics to include safety, empowerment, and boundaries. Go to [www.dovesnest.net/cogcontent](http://www.dovesnest.net/cogcontent) for the recommended curriculum to select lessons for children and youth. Contact the Office Administrator 231-775-5291 or [office@cadcrc.org](mailto:office@cadcrc.org) for the Username, Password, and access to the training video.
5. Topics related to abuse prevention, healthy boundaries, and support for victims will be addressed annually, preferably during Abuse Awareness Sunday in September. Information regarding resources for the congregation will be posted on the church website and around the church facility as requested by the Safe Church Team.

### **C. Record Keeping**

1. All applications including the release of information shall be kept in a locked file in the church office. These records shall be available only to those who make employment or volunteer approval decisions, those who update the files with new information, and those who access the file information for the purpose of investigation.
2. A record of this policy and any amendments adopted by council, as well as the records regarding implementation shall be kept.
3. Careful record keeping is essential in order to respond to an allegation of abuse.
4. Documentation of all steps taken in response to an allegation must be kept on file.
5. Incident records cannot be destroyed or altered. Application and screening records of those involved in the Incident Report must be attached to the incident report and kept indefinitely.
6. After a staff member or volunteer leaves, their application and screening records must remain in the file for a minimum of two years and a maximum of seven years.

### **D. Church Safety Team roles and duties:**

1. Meet with a volunteer or staff person who has questions about something he or she has heard or observed that may be considered abusive.
2. Notify the pastor or president of council of any report the Church Safety Team has received, extending the notification step to the elder board when the alleged offender also is a volunteer or staff person and the alleged incident occurred during one of the church's programs.
3. Ensure that the protocol of Reporting Suspected Abuse (Item VII) is followed.
4. Assign a member of the team to respond to the media when there is public disclosure of the report.
5. Assign a member of the team to assist the claimant and his or her family.
6. Meet with staff, council, and program directors annually to provide training on the CCRC Safe Church Plan and on the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect.
7. Ensure the readiness of program directors to train their volunteers on an annual basis.
8. Review the CCRC Safe Church Plan at least once every five years to adapt it to current church functions and cultural changes.

### **E. Duty to Warn Policy**

Cadillac Christian Reformed Church shall not hide information from a church or nonprofit organization if it has terminated a volunteer or staff person for substantiated misconduct or abuse against a child or youth.

**Revision of the December 2015 document following the 5-year review of the Policy by the CCRC Safe Church Team as approved by Council on \_\_\_\_\_ June 20, 2022 \_\_\_\_\_.**



Incident/Accident Report Form  
Cadillac Christian Reformed Church  
1110 E. Division St., Cadillac, MI 49601  
231-775-5291

Name of person making the report: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Report: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer/Staff position: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of the circumstances (when incident occurred/was reported, location, time of day, persons present at the time, etc.)

Description of the incident (reported or witnessed)

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Names of any witnesses: \_\_\_\_\_

-----**SECTION TWO – SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**-----

If a reasonable suspicion of child abuse exists, COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

When was Children’s Protective Services notified?

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

Caller’s name: \_\_\_\_\_

Caller’s signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Other action taken, if any \_\_\_\_\_

If incident happened during a church function or with volunteers, was a Safe Church Team Member contacted? \_\_\_\_\_

Who? \_\_\_\_\_ When? Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Was the denomination Safe Church ([www.crcna.org/safechurch](http://www.crcna.org/safechurch)) contacted? \_\_\_\_\_

-----**SECTION THREE – FOR ALL INCIDENTS**-----

Program Supervisor’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date the Program Supervisor received the report: \_\_\_\_\_

The Program Supervisor is required to provide a copy of the completed report to the CCRC office.



## CCRC Bullying Policy (for Youth Ministries)

### Definition of bullying:

“Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power and strength. Typically, it is repeated over time.” (“What we know about bullying” – a publication of US Department of Health and Human Resources.)

Not all behavior can be construed as bullying. Bullying has three markers:

- It is intentional
- It is repeated
- It involves an imbalance of power

### Why should we be concerned about bullying?

- Bullying is serious. Many studies have revealed major social, educational, health, and other implications for children who bully, who are bullied, or who witness bullying.
- Bullying from a Christian perspective is a spiritual issue. It’s about treating people as things, rather as image bearers of God. Bullying is about violence against and contempt for others. It creates a climate of fear, insecurity, and suspicion – negative emotions that inhibit the formation of healthy self-concepts, loving relationships, and a strong community.

### Recognizing Bullying Behavior:

**Verbal Bullying:** can be seen in taunting, name-calling, belittling, defamation, racial slurs, sexually abusive or suggestive remarks, malicious nicknames, extortion, abusive phone calls, gossip, or making a child the butt of jokes.

**Physical bullying:** is evidenced by hitting, punching, kicking, shoving, tripping, slapping, choking, biting, scratching, twisting limbs into painful positions, spitting, and damaging clothes or property.

**Relational bullying:** is seen in shunning, ignoring, isolating, excluding, and spreading rumors, lies, gossip to diminish the social standing of the bullied child. The actions are often accompanied by subtle gestures such as eye-rolling, sighs, frowns, sneers, snickers, and hostile body language.

**Cyber bullying:** uses the latest technological tools to hurt others: e-mail, blogs, text messages, cell phones, chat rooms etc. It can be extremely damaging and have devastating results on the target. A simple rumor can be multiplied a thousand times in minutes; a picture on a cell phone can reach around the world via the internet; anonymous threats can arrive in via email, leaving the victim terrorized by an unknown aggressor.

### Signs and Symptoms:

A child may indicate by signs or behavior that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- Is unwilling to go to youth group or youth event
- Becomes withdrawn anxious, or lack in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Attempts to threaten suicide or runs away
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill in the morning
- Has possessions which are damaged or “go missing”
- Has unexplained bruises or cuts
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive, or unreasonable

- Is bullying other children or younger siblings
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous or jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviors could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

## **How can the church address bullying?**

### **Prevent bullying from happening in church –**

- Ensure that leaders in children and youth programs are caring models of Jesus' love.
- Nurture empathy – the root cause of bullying is that bullies lack empathy. The quality of empathy allows a person to enter into and identify with another person's feelings. It is the ability to imagine what it's like to be in the predicament of the other person and, as a result, the ability to communicate that awareness so the other person feels understood. Bullies lack that quality.
  - Practice warm Christian love
  - Spotlight feelings
  - Use service projects with people who are different
  - Practice empathic reactions
  - Praise positive behavior
  - Provide opportunities for fellowship and friendship
- Education committees, staff, teachers, and children program leaders need to be informed about the issue of bullying and how to deal with it. Training is essential (see *Preventing Child Abuse – Creating A Safe Place* - appendix A - C)
- Teach practical coping strategies to children who maybe victims or bystanders
- Bullying often happens outside the supervision of adults. Simple steps such as adequately supervise hallways, after church coffee hour, and other events, can make it more difficult for bullies to act.

### **Policy to address bullying incidents:**

#### **Responsibilities of all those who observe bullying**

- Ensure that all staff and volunteers are trained and aware of the anti-bullying policy and procedures
- Ensure that any incident of bullying during a church activity is dealt with regardless of whether a complaint of bullying has been received
- Provide leadership and role-modeling in appropriate behavior
- Respond promptly, sensitively, and confidentially to all situations where bullying behavior is observed or alleged to have occurred.
- If peers, church members, volunteers, and/or staff are a witness to bullying, report incidents to the (youth) program director.
- Any child or member of CCRC who feels that he or she has been victimized by bullying is encouraged to report the matter to the (youth) program director or an elder.

- Where appropriate, an investigation will be undertaken and disciplinary measures will be taken as necessary.

### **Respond to a bullying incident:**

1. **Victim First** – going to the victim first shows a focus on healing, not aggression.

If we go to the bully first, we reinforce the aggression by giving it (negative) attention.

First Aid for the Victim:

- State what you see: example – “Alice, you are sitting on the floor with your legs crossed, your face is red and you have tears coming down your cheeks. You look upset”.
- Inquire, “Something happened?”
- Reflect back what you hear and comfort child.
- Tell him/her that you will help the child.

### 2. **Address the aggressor (Bully)**

- Practice positive discipline with a bully – the word “discipline” has as its root the word for “to learn”. Discipline is not primarily about punishment but more about teaching new and better ways of behaving. The process of discipline helps bullies identify what they have done wrong, gives them ownership of the problem, helps them develop a process for solving their problem, and leaves their dignity intact.
- Emphasize the three R’s with bullies:
  1. Restitution – fixing what they did, such as paying for a broken toy, giving back the extorted money, apologizing for the malicious words.
  2. Resolution – figuring out a way to keep it from happening again, such as counting to ten when they’re angry or recognizing the stimulus that causes bullying behavior and deciding on a better coping mechanism.
  3. Reconciliation – finding a way to heal the broken relationship.
- Keep the bully away from the victim while you talk with the bully – tell them assertively:
  - a) “You wanted----“(to hurt him, to have his attention, to have his toy)
  - b) “So you -----“(hit him, call him a name,)
  - c) “You may not-----, ----- hurts”.
  - d) “What else could you do?  
When you want-----, say (or do) -----“
  - e) Say or do it now for practice
- Listen actively – questions such as, “How did that make you feel?” or “What could you do to make your friend happier or better?” can stimulate a child to identify with others’ feelings and thoughts. Bullies often do not have feelings for their victims.
- In serious cases of bullying parents should be informed and will be asked to come into a meeting to discuss the problem
- The bullying behavior or threats of bullying must be investigated by the program director and the bullying stopped quickly.

- If the bullying still continues, the bully will be asked not to attend any church functions until he/she stops the bullying behavior.
- Incidents of bullying will be recorded by the (youth) program director.



**Cadillac Christian Reformed Church  
1110 E. Division St.  
Cadillac, MI 49601**

**Parental Consent Form**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (parent/guardian) give permission for  
\_\_\_\_\_ (child/ward), to attend

Name of event or ministry to participate in \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of event or ministry season \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Transportation Consent Form**

I also give consent for the above named to be transported by a designated driver approved by Cadillac Christian Reformed Church. Cadillac Christian Reformed Church confirms that the driver will have insurance coverage on his or her vehicle, and that the driver's record has been reviewed for points. I waive the driver and the Cadillac Christian Reformed Church from liability due to accidental injury suffered in a motor vehicle accident while a passenger in the vehicle.

To be determined as needed - Pick up time \_\_\_\_\_ Drop off time \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Video/Photograph Consent Form**

Yes       No I agree to the publication of photographs and/or video by Cadillac Christian Reformed Church in online (i.e. website, social media, etc.) or print (bulletins, newsletters, fliers, etc.) media not including names.

Yes       No I also agree to the use of names in the aforementioned publications

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (over)

## Medical Information and Consent Form

I also give permission to the supervisors of this event to secure needed emergency medical treatment for the child named above. In case of accident or injury during the event, I release the supervisors from all liability not covered by insurance.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Telephone/cell numbers \_\_\_\_\_

Family's insurance company \_\_\_\_\_

Policy number \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies \_\_\_\_\_

Current medications \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Other pertinent medical  
information \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This parental transportation and medical consent form is valid until \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 6

**Reference Check Form**

Regarding Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of applicant

Reference Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last first

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

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

Questions for the reference check:

How long have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe this person's skills/gifts for working with children. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any concerns about this person's prior work with children or his/her relationship

with children? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe how this person interacts with children. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe how this person disciplines children. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any knowledge about this person's behavior, attitude, or emotions toward children that might cause a parent to worry about this person caring for his/her children? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

If yes, please specify. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Would you have any hesitation to fully endorse this person for providing children/youth ministry work? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

If yes, please specify. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reference Check conducted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Printed name

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

## **Code of Ethics for Volunteers and Staff Child and Youth Programs at CCRC**

Believing that God is calling me to serve children or youth in this congregation,

- My first priority in supervising or volunteering with children or youth will be to seek their spiritual, psychological, and social welfare.
- I will respect each child or youth's cultural or ethnic background.
- I will give the parent[s] of each child or youth full information about the program I am supervising or volunteering in.
- I will not intentionally harm or betray a child or youth's trust. I will use reasonable means to protect each child or youth from abuse while he or she is in my care.]
- I will report a reasonable suspicion of abuse of a child or youth to a responsible person for a proper investigation.
- If I wish to talk to a child or youth alone, it will be within the sight and sound of one or more adults.
- I will answer a child or youth's questions openly and honestly.
- I will work with the children or youth to set guidelines for acceptable behavior within the group. I will expect children or youth to act based on those guidelines. If a child or youth consistently breaks behavioral guidelines, I will seek help from parents and others to assist me in responding.
- If a child or youth is distressed, I will try to offer comfort and help, and I will encourage the child or youth to find appropriate help.
- I will pray for each child or youth regularly and assure them that I care about them.
- I will follow the policies and procedures in the congregation's Abuse Prevention Plan.

---

Signature

Date

---

Volunteer or Staff Position

Supervisor



## Appendix 8

### **Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse**

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of child abuse is not a simple matter. Children rarely exhibit just one sign that suggests they have been the victims of abuse. And some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes or the aftereffects of traumas other than abuse in a child's life.

Conversely, it's possible for abuse to be taking place without the appearance of noticeable symptoms because children have the ability to mask or deny something in their lives that would otherwise be very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, when you observe several signs over a period of time, it may suggest that a child is suffering from abuse. The complexity of this process of observation highlights the need for training among volunteers, staff, and program leaders. Here are some typical signs and symptoms that may alert you to be attentive to the possibility of abuse or neglect:

#### Infants and Preschool Children

- Regression to an earlier stage of behavioral development such as baby talk, thumb sucking, or bedwetting
- Change in social behavior – excessive crying or clinging, becoming aggressive or withdrawn – that is not associated with normal developmental changes
- Physical manifestations such as loss of bowel control, bedwetting, frequent urination, headaches, stomachaches, breathing difficulties, sore throats accompanied by gagging, stains in the child's underclothes
- Exhibiting signs of fear around a family member or a familiar person; fear of a familiar place or object
- Fear of being touched, shying away from physical contact; resistance to being diapered or assisted in the bathroom
- Use of explicit language or sexual behavior that is beyond the child's comprehension or life experience
- Attempting sexual behavior with other children or attending adults
- Unexplained injuries and/or bruises, repeated injuries blamed on the child's carelessness, multiple bruises sustained in one event, or bruises to child's midsection, back, head, or back of thighs; signs of scalding, burning, or distinctive bruising, such as in the shape of a belt buckle; multiple bruises in various stages of healing
- Name-calling or bullying behavior toward other children, sulking or brooding
- Fascination with fire, playing with matches and lighters

#### School-Age Children

- Physical manifestations as above, with the addition of complaints of pain, irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom
- Smearing feces on walls or objects
- Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck; failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort
- Unusual fears – a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences
- Poor concentration in classroom
- Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviors, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing
- Engaging in self-injury; engaging in excessive masturbation or masturbation in a public setting

- Acting enraged and out of control; expressing anger through destruction.
- Shyness about physical touch
- Exhibiting sexual behavior beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in a sexual manner with other children or adults
- Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations, bullying others
- Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions
- Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting
- Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events either because of being punished or to hide bruises
- Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism
- Hyper-vigilance – excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled
- Preoccupation with fire and setting fires

#### Adolescents

- Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight
- Change in sleep patterns, including excessive sleeping, sleeping during the day, and insomnia
- Plunge in school performance
- Perfectionist behavior, excessive self-criticism, attempting to please adults, overreacting to any form of criticism or complaint
- Sexually provocative or asexual behavior, denial of body changes and sexual development; for females, seeking affection from older adult males
- Experimentation with drugs and alcohol
- Self-abusive behavior including cutting self, preoccupation with danger and weapons, suicide attempts
- Truancy from school
- Cruelty to animals, bullying younger children
- Emotional numbness, inability to be emotionally supportive to others
- Having few friends, changing friends often
- Depression and other signs of withdrawal and avoidance
- Pregnancy
- Refusing to attend to basic hygiene
- Rectal and vaginal infections
- Hyper-vigilance – excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled

#### Signs of Neglect

- Appearing to be underfed, constantly hungry, underweight for size and age
- Begging for food, stealing food, hoarding food
- Lack of supervision, underage child supervising another child/other children
- Chronic absenteeism from school, unattended educational needs
- Unattended medical, dental needs
- Consistent or frequent lack of hygiene, poor hygiene, or lack of cleanliness resulting in odors
- For infants, a failure to thrive

#### Parental Behaviors and Home Life

- Not attending meetings about the child, not showing an interest in the child, critical of child, uncomplimentary
- Constantly putting child down, using harsh words to describe child, using threats and unflattering language
- Describing child as underachiever, complaining that he/she lets people down, is unmotivated, achieves less than brothers and sisters
- Speaking child in a way that sounds romantic, too grown-up, too sugary, too perfect
- Hostile, closed-minded, overprotective, isolating, doesn't let others in the house, won't participate in activities with other parents, makes excuses about failing to do tasks, talks about things not being good at home
- Reports of past/other suspicious behavior; reports that an older brother or sister may have been mistreated
- Chemical dependency by one or both parents
- Sudden and dramatic changes in the family's financial security



## **Responding to a Child's Report of Abuse**

When a child reports something to you that raises suspicion the child may have witnessed or been a victim of abuse, these guidelines for responding may be helpful to you:

- Take the child's story seriously.
- Don't respond with judgmental statements such as, "I think you just had a bad dream."
- Don't react with fear or disgust at the child's story; that may cause the child to stop talking or to think you are upset with him or her.
- Don't try to convince the child that the story isn't true or that it did not happen the way the child is reporting it.
- Don't promise the child that you will not tell anyone what he or she shared with you.
- Remind the child that whatever happened was not his or her fault.
- Remind the child that it was a good decision to tell you what happened to him/her.
- Tell the child that you want to find help to prevent another incident from happening.
- Don't offer the child a reward for telling the story or promise the child a gift if he or she tells another adult.
- Reassure the child that he/she does not deserve to be hurt by anyone.
- Don't frighten the child by talking about police involvement or medical examinations to verify the complaint; instead, share with the child that other people need to know about what happened, and they will talk to the child later.
- Don't ask the child to show you any bruises that are beneath his/her clothing or underwear; simply note those bruises that are not concealed. In some communities, removing a child's clothing even to confirm a report of abuse is a violation of the law.
- Don't investigate the child's story; rather, listen to the story and take notes immediately afterwards while the story is still fresh in your mind.
- Don't tell the child that he/she was abused.
- Offer support to the child and remind the child that you care about him/her.
- Follow up in the next weeks and months by speaking to the child and offering support.



## Appendix 10

### CONTACT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

#### **Cadillac Christian Reformed Church Safe Church Team**

Ria Cunningham	231-878-1082
Mary Swaengen	913-553-1075
Athena Bolt	231-775-5291
David VanHouten	231-878-2314

#### **Safe Church Ministry - Christian Reformed Church in North America**

Safe Church Ministry Consultant:

Rev. Eric Kass 616-224-0717 (office) 616-299-2868 (cell)  
EKass@crcna

Director:

Rev. Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen 616-240-8155  
ABenckhuysen@crcna.org

Website: [www.crcna.org/safechurch](http://www.crcna.org/safechurch)

Email: [safechurchministry@crcna.org](mailto:safechurchministry@crcna.org)

#### **Resources available in the CCRC office:**

Child Protection Law – DHS Pub 3 (Rev. 5-09)

Mandated Reporter’s Resource Guide – DHS Pub 112 (Rev. 10-08)

Preventing Child Abuse – Beth A. Swagman – Faith Alive

Child Sexual Abuse Response Plan – 2007 Christianity Today

Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church – Church Law and Tax

Report Who Are the Safe Church Team Advocates? – CRCNA

Circle of Grace Teacher’s training <http://dovesnest.net/Circle-of-Grace-25-minute-video>  
and <https://dovesnest.net/cogtv25>.

Circle of Grace Curriculum for children and youth. [www.dovesnest.net/cogcontent](http://www.dovesnest.net/cogcontent)

(Contact the CCRC Office Administrator 231-775-5291 or [office@cadcrc.org](mailto:office@cadcrc.org) for help with logging in and accessing the training and video.)



INSERT FORM DHS-3200 HERE



**Appendix 12**

**Interview Protocol**

Regarding Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of applicant

**Interview Questions (Please mark which questions were asked. Note can be written on the back.)**

1. Discuss your interest in working with children or youth.
2. Discuss how you set limits with children/youth.
3. Give examples of situations when you disciplined or corrected a child's or youth's behavior.
4. What gifts do you have for working with children or youth?
5. Describe a situation when you became angry or frustrated with a child or youth and how you handled it.
6. Describe a time when you interacted with a child or youth and felt guilty about the interaction.
7. Children and youth need affection and attention. Describe what you would and wouldn't do to meet those needs.
8. What would be your reaction to a child's or youth's complaint of inappropriate behavior by a parent or other caregiver?
9. What do you think should be the church's response to adults who are accused by a child or youth of misconduct?
10. Is there any part of the church's policy you disagree with and could not follow?
11. Describe the risks of meeting one to one with a child or youth.
12. Describe your social support network.
13. Describe how sexual contact between an adult and a child or youth could be harmful.
14. What are some examples of emotional abuse and why is it harmful?
15. Describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and also to this church.

**Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name Signature

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