

**Sexual Abuse Policy**  
**Vancouver Apostolic Lutheran Church**  
4/25/2017

**I. Preventive Policies:**

**1. Open Door Policy:**

This church has an open-door policy in order to safeguard our minors. As much as possible, all adults in church positions who work one-on-one with minors shall have a second adult present in the room. When an adult and minor are working or conferencing together in a room without other minors or adults present, as much as possible, the door shall remain open.

**2. Background Checks:**

Those in positions that work with minors, including but not limited to, pastors, ministers and teachers, are required to get a background check. If a background check reveals a prior sexual misconduct-related offense, that person will be permanently ineligible to be in any position that involves the care, supervision and/or teaching of minors and/or providing counseling. This includes, but is not limited to, nursery, daycare, or overnight activities involving minors or mentorship of minors. In addition, any person being considered for such a position shall receive a copy of this policy to read and sign.

**3. Waiting Period:**

A minimum of a 1 year waiting period is required before new church members are allowed to volunteer in, or be voted to, the above mentioned positions involving minors. This waiting period may be waived, on a case by case basis, by the Board for a new member who, being a member in good standing of another Apostolic Lutheran Church congregation, transfers their membership to the Vancouver Apostolic Lutheran Church.

**II. Addressing Circumstances of Sexual Abuse:**

**1. Statement of Purpose:**

This section of the policy is intended to provide the church with a means whereby circumstances of abuse can be addressed. This section of the policy addresses the following areas: the church, abuse, abuser and victims, all of which are hereby defined:

- A. The church: Defined further as church leadership: Apostolic Lutheran Church of Vancouver Board members, Officers of the Board, Pastors, Lay Preachers and Teachers.

- B. Abuse: Abuse occurs when an individual uses his/her position of power and/or authority to control another person for his/her own gratification. This policy addresses sexual abuse of a minor.
- C. Abuser: Any person who violates a minor as stated above in a sexual manner.
- D. Victims: Those minors whose person has been violated by said abuse, of whom the Christian church on earth has been given the responsibility.

## **2. The Responsibilities of the Church:**

Silence is neither required nor expected from a victim of child abuse or the Church, even if the abuser has made a confession of their sin against God, man, and the law of the land. A victim of abuse is encouraged to seek out a person they can speak to in confidence. The church can provide a reference list of qualified or appropriate person(s) for the victim to speak to in confidence.

- A. The church is exhorted in God's word, to place in positions of leadership those whose lives are in accordance with I Timothy 3:1-13, and to continue to exhort with all long-suffering those who have been asked to serve.
- B. It is the responsibility of the church as a whole, and more specifically, church leadership, to respond to allegations of sexual abuse among its members towards minor children.

## **3. Reporting of Cases:**

The church will observe the laws of the land in regard to sexual abuse of a child.

- A. The church will in good faith strive to make itself reasonably aware of the laws of the State of Washington as they pertain to sexual abuse of a minor.
- B. The church will in good faith strive to keep records of information discussed concerning substantiated allegations of abuse.
- C. The church will encourage the abuser to self-report. If the abuser will not self-report, the church is to report the abuse case according to good faith. The church will appoint two or more dis-interested persons to report the abuse.

#### **4. Follow-up:**

The church is encouraged to continue to uphold those involved and his/her family to the edification of the church and to the glory of God. *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.*

I Thessalonians 5:14.

- A. The first responsibility of the church is to provide protection and support for the victim and the victim's family as deemed necessary within the abilities of the church.
- B. The church may refer counseling as to bring about healing and forgiveness. This is intended primarily for the victim in the form of private counseling and/or support groups.
- C. Professional Treatment for an abuser is required for the purpose of accountability and ultimately a repentance, to bring about fruits of an amended life.
- D. The abuser will not be allowed to serve in any position in the church.

### **III. Sex Abusers Attending Church Functions:**

The Church has a responsibility, but not an undue obligation, to provide opportunities for individuals who have previously engaged in abuse to attend Church functions. When a penitent abuser wishes to attend Church functions it will be the responsibility of the abuser to find a qualified chaperone and the following practices will be followed.

#### **1. Chaperones must be approved by the Church. They shall:**

- A. be a mature adult and at least 21 years old and of the same gender as the abuser.
- B. have no sexual abuse history.
- C. undergo a background check.
- D. be provided a copy of the Sexual Abuse Policy of the Vancouver Apostolic Lutheran Church, be instructed as to its content, and be willing to take responsibility seriously.

#### **2. When a chaperone is approved, they shall:**

- A. meet with the Church prior to the abuser's attendance at the Church to verify and agree to enforce all related restrictions.
- B. be made familiar with the abuser's past to include accusations, charges, and if charged, any court imposed conditions.
- C. sign the Sexual Abuse Policy.
- D. maintain physical or visual contact with the abuser while on Church premises. They shall enforce all requirements as listed in section III.3.
- E. meet with the Church on an as-needed basis to communicate all concerns.

**3. The abuser shall:**

- A. meet with the Church prior to the abuser's attendance at Church functions to verify and agree to all related restrictions.
- B. agree to and sign the Sexual Abuse Policy prior to his/her attendance of any Church functions.
- C. not attend any Church related activities without a chaperone.
- D. not go anywhere in the building that has not been approved for them to enter and will never enter any area where children's activities/youth ministries are located. Except for the main service, they will not participate in any activity where children are present.
- E. come to the premises no more than 5 minutes ahead and leave immediately after the service has ended.
- F. not interact on a personal basis with any child under the age of eighteen.
- G. when using the Church bathroom, the chaperone must accompany the abuser in the bathroom.
- H. not sit by/near children. If a child sits by him/her in church or enters an area in which they are present, they will move or leave the area.

Additional parameters:

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**4. Additional steps, as required:**

- A. The Church can consider the possibility of notifying the parents of children of the presence of a sex offender. Such a step is often difficult to administer, therefore the Church needs to fully explore the full ramifications of notifying parents. The abuser or his/her family should be informed if such a step is contemplated.
  
- B. The Church may meet with any known abuser and/or victim to establish additional parameters concerning situations wherein they may be attending the same Vancouver Church function.

Additional parameters:

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Signatures and date:

Church Representative:

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Abuser:

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Chaperone

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date signed \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_