

Zion Lutheran Church of Pittsfield

Safe Church Policy

Overview: Zion Lutheran Church is dedicated to providing a safe environment for all people to worship and be in community with one another. We live out our baptismal calling when we commit ourselves to creating a place of true sanctuary for all people, especially children and youth.

Members, clergy, staff, volunteers, or any other sponsors or personnel conducting any youth event within the building or auspices of Zion Lutheran Church, including off-site events, shall agree to assure the following are followed to the greatest extent possible:

Basic guidelines:

- Congregation leaders who work with children and youth, as well as at least one member of the congregation council, are encouraged to receive Safe Church training (either new training or a repeat course) each calendar year. Additionally, all members of Zion Lutheran are invited and encouraged to engage in training. Safe Church trainings occur in the New England Synod throughout the year; an online training video is also available on the synod website.
- All adults who work with children and youth will have a CORI check. Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) is a record of all criminal court appearances in Massachusetts for a particular individual, including arrests, convictions, dismissals, and serious violations. CORI reports will be reviewed by the pastor and president of the congregation council. Clergy, staff, and congregation leaders will be CORI checked at least once every three years.

Monitoring interactions with children & youth:

- All events and ministries for children and youth shall include at least two adults present at all times.
- In working with youth (middle school and high school), at least one adult should have attained the age of 21, AND be at least 4 years older than the oldest youth in the group.
- Ratio guideline for adults: youth are as follows (keeping in mind the two adult rule as the default).
 - 0-5 years 1:5
 - 5-10 years 1:6
 - 10-14 years 1:8
 - 14-18 years 1:10
- All children and youth activities shall be monitored by adults at all times.
- Adults should avoid transporting only one youth in a car.
- No unrelated adult should be alone with one youth or child (the second adult must be within eyesight).
- No unrelated teenager should be alone with one younger child at any time (an adult must be in eyesight).
- Proper age-appropriate restraints (seat belts, child safety seats) should be used in all vehicles transporting children and youth.
- Non-related adults shall not transport only one youth in a car. If unavoidable the child MUST ride in the rear seat.
- Unrelated males and females should sleep in separate housing.
- No unrelated youth should sleep in the same housing as an adult.

Behavioral standards for ministry with children or youth:

Adults shall not:

- Provide children or youth with alcohol, illegal drugs, or pornography. The exception is communion wine when celebrating the Eucharist.
- Consume alcohol (except Holy Communion) or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children or youth event.
- Be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs at any children or youth event.
- Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior.
- Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth.
- Discuss sexual activities or fantasies with children or youth.
- Possess firearms or concealed weapons. Special exceptions may be made for off-duty police officers or others required to carry firearms.

Photographs of children & youth:

No photographs or other recordings of youth or children are to be used for web or print publication without the written consent of the parent(s). Any publications or recording will not include identifying information such as last name or personal contact information.

Responding to concerns:

Anyone who knows of action suspected of conflicting with these guidelines or any matter endangering a child or youth at Zion Lutheran Church is asked to immediately report the matter to the president of the congregational council.

This policy is adopted by Zion Lutheran Church by action of its council on September 28, 2015.