

HTLC CHILD SAFETY POLICY

June 8, 2010

Amended (Section 6) May 13, 2014

Amended (throughout) December, 2019

Amendments adopted by Church Council on January 14, 2020

**Amendment to Section 5, Paragraph 5.1 adopted by Church Council on
November 14, 2023**

**Amended (throughout) March, 2024, Amendments adopted by Church
Council on May 14, 2024**

**Amended (throughout) January, 2026, Amendments adopted by Church
Council on February 10, 2026 including new Section 6.6**

Introduction

WHEREAS Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (HTLC) is committed to being a safe haven for all children and their families and caregivers by: building Christ-centered, positive, trusting relationships that nurture the healthy growth of children and strengthen families, using our resources to provide a sanctuary for children, creating a Gospel-centered, faith-based teaching and learning environment and hospitality that welcomes all children with their families and caregivers, developing programs that help children flourish, and collaborating with other faith communities, agencies and service organizations that work for the well-being of children in our community.¹

HTLC hereby adopts the following policies and procedures:

Definitions

The following terms used herein are defined as follows:

1. *Paid Staff:* Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, pastoral intern, parish worker, director of intergenerational ministries or employee who is paid.
2. *Office Staff:* A paid staff member who is responsible for administration of the HTLC office.
3. *Children/Youth/Minor:* A minor is any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by Washington state law. Further, child or children as used in this policy means 5th grader or younger. Youth means rising 6th grader through high school senior, including high

¹ Adapted from *Safe Haven for Children: A Resource for Congregations*. © Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

school seniors who have reached their 18th birthdays and are no longer minors.

4. *Adult:* Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by Washington state law and who is no longer a high school student.
5. *Volunteer:* Means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults.
6. *Screening:* Means both the 6 month minimum rule for volunteers as described in Section 1.1 and the background check procedures as described in Section 1.2. With regard to paid staff, screening also includes a check of references as described in Section 1.5.
7. *Council Executive Committee:* The current President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer of HTLC's Church Council.
8. *On-site:* On the premises of the HTLC, including the parking lots.
9. *Off-site:* All premises away from HTLC.

Section 1. Employee and Volunteer Screening

1.1 No one who has been attending HTLC for less than 6 months shall be allowed to volunteer with children/youth, with the exception of seminarians on teaching parish assignment.

1.2 Paid staff and adult volunteers should be subject to the same background screening for criminal convictions in Washington state and other states on a yearly basis. HTLC office staff shall be responsible for conducting the annual screenings, receiving and keeping the completed background check request forms, and keeping track of completed screenings.

1.3 The persons who will be subject to screening are: all paid staff of HTLC, Council Executive Committee, and any adult who volunteers with children or youth, including any adult who is a chaperone on any overnight trip sanctioned by HTLC.

1.4 The above-mentioned paid staff and volunteers shall fill out a background investigation consent form annually, updating the form(s) according to Washington state requirements. Any concerns raised by the background investigation will be addressed on a case-by-case basis by the Senior Pastor, Executive Committee member, or Chair of the Children, Youth and Families Committee if such committee exists.

1.5 At hire, references shall be required of paid staff, but not of volunteers. References shall be checked by HTLC office staff and the results reviewed by the Senior Pastor. Any reference checks of pastoral candidates will be conducted by the Call Committee as part of the call process.

1.6 If screening reveals a past conviction of a crime or crimes against children, the paid staff or volunteer with the conviction shall not be allowed to work with the youth or children of HTLC.

1.7 If screening reveals a conviction for any other crime, the Senior Pastor along with the President and Vice President of the Church Council shall determine what, if any, restrictions shall be placed on the paid staff or volunteer with the conviction. If screening reveals a conviction on the part of a Pastor, the Council Executive Committee shall determine what steps should be taken.

1.8 Information obtained through the screening processes will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. All information discovered or obtained through the above-referenced means will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted if possible. These materials will be archived.

Section 2. Education of Staff and Volunteers

2.1 Full-time paid staff will have CPR certification within three months of being hired and will maintain current certification while employed at HTLC. HTLC will pay for the CPR certification. Any volunteer working with children or youth shall be encouraged to obtain CPR training.

2.2 Paid staff and volunteers working with children or youth shall receive a copy of this policy and the HTLC Procedure for Concerns about Child Abuse or Neglect as part of their training. Such training shall be offered by the Child, Youth and Family Committee if such committee exists. Trainees will sign and acknowledge receipt of this policy and the HTLC Procedure for Concerns about Child Abuse or Neglect. Paid staff shall be responsible for periodically reviewing and updating the HTLC Procedure for Concerns about Child Abuse or Neglect with the assistance of adult volunteers.

2.3 HTLC's written policies and procedures regarding child safety will be posted on the HTLC website; paper copies shall be made available to any parent/guardian or member of the congregation upon request.

Section 3. Procedures for Concern about Child Abuse or Neglect

3.1 If the paid staff or volunteer believes there is immediate danger to a youth or child, they shall call 911.

3.2 If there is no immediate danger to the youth or child, but the paid staff or volunteer is concerned that a youth or child is being neglected or abused, they shall first write down everything that happened to raise their concern. The child or youth's family members shall not be informed of the concern at this time.

3.3 Next, the concern shall be shared *only* with the Senior Pastor and one other person from the list below. If the concern is about the Senior Pastor or other paid staff member, then the concern should be shared with two members of the Council Executive Committee listed below. The child or youth's family members shall not be informed of the concern by the initial reporter at this time.

- Senior Pastor
- Director of Faith Formation and Communications
- Chair of the Children, Youth and Families Committee if such committee exists

- Council Executive Committee:
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer

3.4 The persons with whom the concern has been shared will report back to the concerned person within a reasonable time frame regarding what measures may have been taken to address the concern. If the concerned person reasonably believes the information has not been properly and timely followed up on, the concerned person may report the concern to two (other) members of the Council Executive Committee.

Section 4. Supervision of Children, Junior Helpers

4.1 Ratios for on-site and off-site programs and activities shall strive to meet the guidelines for Washington state licensed facilities as follows:

Adult/child ratios for on-site programs (based on WAC 110-300A-2090 or successor recodification):

- (a) Nursery: (0 mo.-29 mo.) with no more than 2 infants (under 12 mo.) **1:7**
- (b) Pre-School/Pre-K Sunday School class: (30 mo.- 6 years not attending kindergarten) **1:10**
- (c) School age Sunday School classes: (5-12 years in kindergarten or elementary) **1:15**

4.2 Adult chaperone/child ratios for off-site activities 1:7 if children are under age 12; 1:15 if over 12.

4.3 If Nursery staff or other screened adult is not available to staff the Nursery, the Nursery shall be closed.

4.4 The Nursery staff or other screened adult shall remain in the Nursery while children are present. Sunday School teachers of pre-school, pre-K and elementary school aged children shall remain with their classroom while class is in session. They should communicate with the Director of Faith Formation and Communications in case of an emergency in their classroom (in addition to calling 911 if warranted).

4.5 Parents/guardians shall be expected to remain in the church building while their children are in the Nursery and shall be encouraged to remain in the building while their children are attending Sunday School.

4.6 Toilet break procedures

(a) Prior to leaving their child(ren) in the Nursery, parents or guardians of children who are not toilet-trained may sign a permission form for the Nursery staff to change their child(ren)'s diapers as necessary. Nursery staff shall not change a child(ren)'s diaper unless the parent or guardian has signed and submitted the permission form. HTLC paid staff shall download and post proper diaper changing procedures according to the King County Public Health Department's Child Care Health Program in the Nursery. Nursery staff shall review such procedures prior to changing any child's diaper.

(b) Toilet-trained children in the Nursery, Pre-school/Pre-K Sunday School children shall be accompanied to the bathroom by a screened adult or by their own parent/guardian.

(c) Whenever practicable, elementary school-age Sunday School and Confirmation youth shall use the buddy system to the bathroom, drinking fountain or anywhere else in church where they are away from their parent/guardian or other adult supervisor.

4.7 Supervision of Junior Helpers

(a) Middle and High School students may become Junior Helpers.

(b) Junior Helpers shall be supervised by screened and trained adult volunteers, adult counselors or HTLC paid staff.

(c) Junior Helpers shall not accompany pre-school/pre-K children to the bathroom unless they are related to the child(ren) by blood or marriage, in which case they may accompany such child(ren).

(d) Junior Helpers may provide supervision of toilet-trained school-age children to the bathroom, but only in groups of 2 or more.

Section 5. Miscellaneous

5.1 Policy on use of photographs/video of children: Photographs and video of children (including those placed on the HTLC web site or social media accounts) shall not identify the children by any name, with the exception of photographs taken for the HTLC directory and photographs posted in the church building. HTLC will not release photographs or videos of any child to newspapers, online media outlets, or television without notice.

5.2 Use of HTLC rooms for child/youth instruction: All rooms used for Nursery and Sunday School instruction shall have windows, including a window in the door.

5.3 Persons with History of Abusing Children: Church members with knowledge that a member or regularly attending person has a history of abusing children are encouraged to report such knowledge to two of the following: Senior Pastor, Director of Faith Formation and Communications, Chair of the Children, Youth and Families Committee, if such committee exists or a member of the Council Executive Committee. The recipients of this information shall encourage any member or other person regularly attending HTLC who has a history of abusing children to covenant not to be in direct contact with children.

5.4 Prevention of Peer Harassment: The Director of Faith Formation and Communications shall periodically include group conversations about inappropriate touch, humor, embarrassing comments and other potentially sensitive topics with Middle and High School students.

Respectfully Submitted by the Child Safety Committee (2010):

Bridget Swanson

Dan Thieme
Pr. Sue Wanwig
Julie Newcomer (staff)
Kathy Fisher (staff)
Lynn Tuttle

Section 6. Social Media and Electronic Communications between HTLC staff and children/youth

6.1 HTLC staff shall not communicate via Social Media or other electronic forms of communication, such as email or text messaging, with HTLC children. HTLC staff may take photographs or videos of children for church purposes, including posting on HTLC social media accounts and websites without names or identifying descriptions.

6.2 HTLC staff may communicate electronically, including via Social Media sponsored by HTLC, with HTLC Middle and High School students. Due to the nature of Social Media, HTLC will not have control over the dissemination of images or videos on Social Media once posted, except that staff may not “tag” or otherwise identify HTLC children or youth in photos.

6.3 All electronic communication between HTLC staff and HTLC Middle and High School students shall adhere to the "two deep" rule. Two adult staff members or one adult staff member plus the youth's parent or guardian must be openly copied or included on all messages or message threads.

6.4 HTLC Staff shall follow the HTLC Social Media Policy. HTLC staff shall not submit “friend” or “follow” requests to HTLC youth under age 18, including any student who is still in high school regardless of age, but may accept “friend” or “follow” requests from such youth.

6.5 Adult leaders of youth groups and former youth members who have departed from HTLC or who have "aged out" of a program should be immediately removed from electronic communication with HTLC Social Media groups, sites, list serves etc. that are intended for that program, except to the extent they become HTLC Staff or volunteers working with HTLC Youth as described in this policy.

6.6 *Prohibition on Ephemeral Messaging Between Adults and Minors.* To ensure the safety and protection of minors, the use of any messaging service or platform that automatically deletes, conceals, or makes messages inaccessible after delivery (commonly referred to as “disappearing messages” or “ephemeral messaging”) is strictly prohibited for communications between adults and minors. No Adult Staff member or Volunteer may engage in one-on-one communication with a Minor or Youth through platforms or features such as Snapchat, Instagram “Vanish Mode”, “WhatsApp disappearing messages” or any other similar service. All electronic communications between Adults and Minors must occur on approved channels that allow for permanent recordkeeping, oversight and accountability.

Respectfully Submitted by the Social Media Task Force:

Bridget Swanson

Jerome Roache

Kathy Fletcher Rodgers

Kathy Fisher (staff)

Julie Newcomer (staff)

Haley Snyder (high school student)

Meredith Thieme (high school student)

Blake Swanson (high school student)

Amendments adopted by Church Council on May 13, 2014.

Revised throughout December, 2019:

Janet Piehl (Chair, Children, Youth and Families Committee)

Julie Duffie (Member, Children, Youth and Families Committee and Church Council)

Lynn Tuttle (Member, Church Council Executive Committee)

Kelsey Joyce (Member, Children, Youth and Families Committee)

Bridget Swanson

Pr. Deanna Wildermuth (staff-Senior Pastor)

Kathy Fisher (staff-Director of Intergenerational Ministry Programs)

Amendments adopted by Church Council on January 14, 2020.

Amendment to Section 5, paragraph 5.1 adopted by Church Council on November 14, 2023.

Amendments throughout adopted by Church Council on May 14, 2024.

Revised throughout January, 2026:

Bridget Swanson

Kelsey Joyce

Danette Glassy

Julia Glassy (staff)

Amendments adopted by Church Council on February 10, 2026, including new Section 6.6.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Procedure for Concerns about Child Abuse and Neglect

What do I do if I am concerned that a child is being neglected or abused?

This could be at church, a church-related event, or at home/school/other community activity.

If there is immediate danger to a child, call 911.

If there is no immediate risk, please write down everything that happened to raise your concern. Use direct quotations when possible. The idea is to have documentation of the facts as you see them. It's your story of what you witnessed. Your writing does not have to be fancy or extensive. Regardless of whether you write on paper or use electronic means, please put your name, date and time at the bottom of the page. It's best to write things down promptly while it is fresh. Please do not inform the child's family members of your concern.

Next, share your concerns *only* with the Senior Pastor and one other person from the list below. If the concern is about the Senior Pastor or other Paid Staff member, then share your concerns with two members of the Council Executive Committee listed below.

- Senior Pastor (Rhonda Bostrom)
- Director of Faith Formation and Communications (Julia Glassy)
- Council Executive Committee:
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer

The persons with whom you have shared your concern will report back to you within a reasonable time frame regarding what measures may have been taken to address your concern. If you reasonably believe they have not properly and timely followed up on the information you provided, you may report your concern to two other persons listed above.

HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY
Adopted by Church Council on May 13, 2014
Updated by Church Council on January 14, 2020
Updated by Church Council on February 10, 2026

Defining Social Media for Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (HTLC) use

Social Media are web and mobile device-based tools for sharing and communicating. HTLC recognizes Social Media to be valuable ways to communicate with members, disseminate HTLC's ministry and mission both to existing and prospective members, help members communicate and share with one another various aspects of their lives and help them feel more connected to each other and to the HTLC faith community. Online social media tools have made it possible for anyone with an internet connection to:

- *Listen:* What are members of HTLC saying about their congregation, its mission and their lives?
- *Post:* What methods are members using to communicate-images, text, audio/video?
- *Comment:* What are other members saying about social media activity?
- *Sharing:* What information can we share with other members? How can we use Social Media to communicate HTLC's mission and ministry to prospective members and others outside our congregation?

HTLC recognizes Social Media can be effective tools for communication. However, it is important to have safeguards and understand the appropriate use of Social Media. Below are guidelines for Social Media use by HTLC staff and a manual for best practices and procedures.

Social Media Safety Guidelines for HTLC staff

- If staff want to engage in personal social media activity, staff shall maintain a separate account (including, e.g., page, blog, handle or space) for personal activities and contacts. All activity by HTLC sponsored Social Media shall be made by staff in their professional capacity only. It is important to understand that staff members represent HTLC. Activity should be consistent with the mission and ministry of HTLC.
- When acting in their professional capacities and when using HTLC sponsored Social Media, staff will use their own names in social media activity.
- Be mindful that the internet is a public space and postings will last forever. Consider everything you post to be as public as a newspaper or bulletin board submission. You cannot take anything back on the internet, so be sure you mean what you say.
- Do not post member email addresses, mailing addresses or phone numbers.
- Do not give out personal information about yourself such as your home address or phone number.
- Respect intellectual property (including copyright and trademark laws).
- Read and follow the terms of use for each type of Social Media you use.
- Respect your audience and be thoughtful. Do not refer to members without permission by name or post images of them without their permission. Do not post confidential, private or sensitive information about anyone.

- Read and follow the HTLC Child Safety Policy guidelines for interaction with HTLC youth (youth means rising 6th grader through high school senior including high school seniors who have reached their 18th birthdays and are no longer minors) via Social Media.
- Be prepared to respond to negative or inaccurate posts if response is warranted.
- Correct inaccurate postings quickly and honestly.
- Pastors should not submit "friend," "follow," or similar requests to members or potential members because the disparity of the relationship may unduly influence the member or potential member to accept the request. Staff members may submit "friend," "follow," or similar requests to members or potential members as they deem appropriate.
- If you have a question about a potential social media activity, consult the Senior Pastor for guidance.

Social Media Practices and Procedures Manual

- **Publication Schedule:** Establish a schedule for how often posts will appear in various social media to ensure areas don't become stale. Posts should encourage member contributions by inviting members to comment and/or post announcements and reminders themselves.
- **Automated Posts:** Automation methods may help to keep the site fresh, i.e. announcements about regularly scheduled events.
- **Moderator Schedule:** The Senior Pastor shall designate a staff member who is primarily responsible for monitoring HTLC social media activity including on the HTLC web site.
- **Develop a Place for Members to Reflect on their Faith:** A member care of fellowship wall or group could serve to help members post reflections and answer questions.
- **Integrate Communications:** Develop a strategy to integrate Social Media activity with key messages about HTLC by way of other forms of communication such as the HTLC newsletter, bulletin, web site, email and word of mouth.
- **Disclaimer:** If you maintain a personal blog or page, include a disclaimer that the posts on that site are your own opinions and not those of HTLC.
- **Email:** Email is one form of communication, but may not be appropriate for matters that are legally, emotionally or pastorally sensitive. Staff members have the discretion to determine if a conversation is better held in person or on the phone rather than via email.

Respectfully Submitted by the Social Media Task Force:

Bridget Swanson
Jerome Roache
Kathy Fletcher Rodgers
Kathy Fisher (staff)
Julie Newcomer (staff)
Haley Snyder (high school student)
Meredith Thieme (high school student)
Blake Swanson (high school student)

Updated January, 2026 by:

Bridget Swanson
Kelsey Joyce
Danette Glassy
Julia Glassy (staff)

BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION CONSENT

I, _____ (applicant complete name), hereby authorize Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (HTLC), 8501 S.E. 40th St., Mercer Island, WA 98040, and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my criminal background as required for all employees of HTLC and volunteers who work with children and youth or drive while volunteering at HTLC. I understand that as long as I am employed by HTLC or volunteer in this capacity at HTLC, this independent investigation will be performed on an annual basis. I further understand that the results of the investigation will remain on file at HTLC. The results will be considered confidential unless otherwise required by law and only shared with the Senior Pastor, President and Vice President of the Church Council as needed. HTLC will provide a copy of the investigative results to me at my request.

I release HTLC and/or its agents and any person or entity, which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims, or lawsuits in regards to the information obtained.

The following is my true and complete legal name, and all information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. ***Please attach a copy of your drivers' license or other government issued photo identification to this form.***

(Please print) Last Name	Middle Initial	First Name
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Maiden Name or other names used

Present Street Address	How Long?
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City/State	ZIP Code
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Previous Street Address	How Long?
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