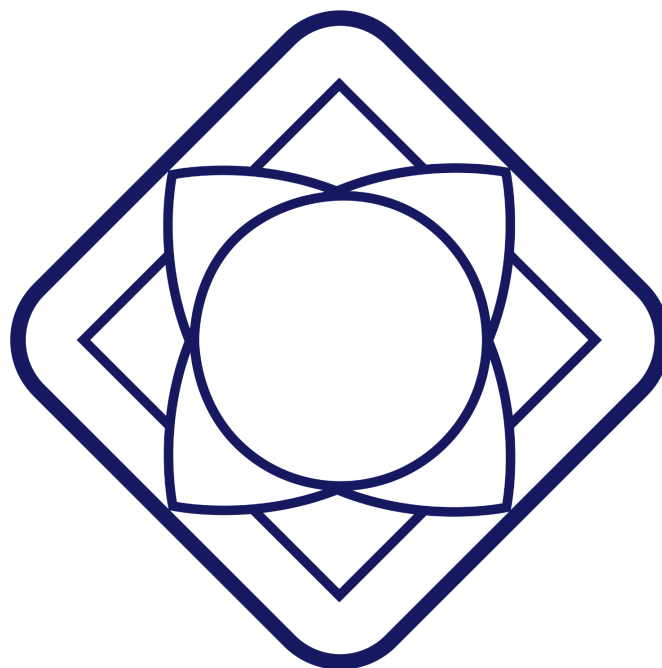


The 2023-2024 Handbook

of



The First Lutheran Church Choir School

First Lutheran Church
327 South Dakota Ave.
Sioux Falls, SD 57104
fcsf.org/choirschool

Table of Contents

- Pg. 3: Prayers and Contact Information
- Pg. 4: FLC Choir School Information
- Pg. 5: Weekly Schedule Overview
- Pg. 6: Vocal Choirs, Handbell Choirs
- Pg. 7: Piano Lab
- Pg. 8: Parent and Student Communication
- Pg. 9: **2023-2024 Worship Schedules**
- Pg. 11: RSCM VOICE *for* LIFE
- Pg. 12: RSCM Awards, Attendance Policies
- Pg. 13: Choir School Entrance and Promotion
- Pg. 14: Choir School Standards
- Pg. 15: VOICE *for* LIFE Progress Tracking, Behavior Guidelines
- Pg. 17: After School Care, Choir School Meals
- Pg. 18: FLC Policies and Procedures for Working With Children
- Pg. 27: Volunteer Application Form

Welcome to the FLC Choir School!

This handbook is intended as a resource to all participating in the First Lutheran Church Choir School, including all vocal choirs, handbell choirs, and the piano lab at First Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls. It provides detailed information about the choirs and guidelines for participation.

FLC Choir School Mission Statement

The FLC Children's and Youth Music program will establish a strong foundation in children for musical and liturgical participation in worship.

The Chorister's Prayer

*Bless, O Lord, us thy servants who minister in thy temple;
Grant that what we sing with our lips, we may believe in our hearts,
And what we believe in our hearts we may show forth in our lives;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

A Prayer for Church Musicians

*O God of majesty, whom saints and angels delight to worship:
Pour out your Spirit on your servants who, with the gifts of music,
Enliven our praises and proclaim your word with power.
Through this ministry give us new awareness of your beauty and grace,
And join our voices with all the choirs of heaven, both now and forever;
Through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Contact Information

Director of Children's and Youth Music

Matt Tylutki

mtylutki@flcsf.org

Office: 605.339.1983 ext. 242

Cell: 605.679.7741

Days off: Friday and Saturday

Director of Worship and Music

Zachary Brockhoff

zbrockhoff@flcsf.org

Office: 605.339.1983 ext. 260

Days off: Monday

The Choirs of the FLC Choir School

FLC Choir School

Founded in 2022, the First Lutheran Church Choir School strives to establish a strong foundation in children for musical and liturgical participation in worship. In the creation of this program, we recognized music's innate ability to change the lives of children and youth who sing, ring, and play music and those who listen. Sacred music of great quality, helps us proclaim the promises of God in word and song. There is no greater way to share the good news of Christ than through music. As Martin Luther reminds us, "The Holy Spirit honors music as an instrument of His proper work," that is, through music we are strengthened in faith with the hope of Jesus' promise of life.

As a part of the FLC Choir School we will prepare and equip students to make music at the highest level, and engage them in sharing their music with First Lutheran Church and the greater Sioux Falls Community. In return we hope that students of the FLC Choir School are equipped with the tools to seek out scholarships in higher education, find vocational opportunities, and be lifelong musicians once graduated from the program.

Contained in this handbook you will find an extensive catalog of the FLC Choir School's offerings, procedures, and schedules. If you have any questions about any of the material contained in this handbook, please contact FLC's Director of Children's and Youth Music, Matt Tylutki (mtylutki@flcsf.org).

Weekly Schedule Overview

Monday

3:30-4:30 - Piano Lab open practice

Tuesday

3:00-4:30 - Supervised Homework Time

3:30-4:30 - Piano Lab open practice

4:30-5:15 - Piano Lab

5:15-6:00 - Carol Choir

6:00-6:30 - Meal/RSCM instruction time

6:30-7:30 - FLC Choristers make-up rehearsal

Wednesday

3:00-4:30 - Supervised Homework Time

3:30-4:30 - Piano Lab open practice

4:30-5:15 - Carillon Ringers

5:15-5:45 - Meal (non music department)/RSCM instruction time

5:45-6:30 - Middle School Bells

7:00-7:45 - High School Bells

Thursday

3:00-4:30 - Supervised Homework Time

3:30-4:30 - Piano Lab open practice

4:30-5:15 - Piano Lab

5:15-5:45 - Meal

5:45-6:15 - RSCM instruction time

6:15-7:30 - FLC Choristers

There will be no programming after Christmas; December 25, 2023 through January 7, 2024.

There will be no programming the week after Easter; April 1, 2024 through April 7, 2024.

Vocal Choirs

Carol Choir: Carol Choir is for grades K-2. In this ensemble, children explore their singing abilities in an age appropriate and fun atmosphere. Participation in this group will also help lay the foundation for participation in the FLC Choristers. They sing at 9:00 AM Sunday worship at least twice each semester and at Choir School events.

Rehearsals on Tuesdays, 5:15 PM - 6:00 PM

FLC Choristers: The First Lutheran Church Choristers is for grades 3-8. Following the structure of the RSCM VOICE *for* LIFE curriculum, this ensemble develops advanced vocal skills, knowledge of music theory, sight-singing, and knowledge of choral repertoire. They will regularly sing at 9:00 AM Sunday worship, Christmas Eve services, Holy Week and Easter services, and at choir school events. Choristers will also have opportunities to embark on tours locally and nationally, as well as participating in RSCM summer courses.

Rehearsals on Thursdays, 6:15 PM - 7:30 PM

Optional/Make-up rehearsals on Tuesday, 6:30 PM - 7:45 PM

Handbell Choirs

Carillon Ringers: For all beginning ringers, grades 1-8. Serving as an introduction to handbell ringing, the Carillon Ringers will introduce ringers to the mechanics of handbell and handchime ringing, and reading basic music notation in a fun and age appropriate setting. The group will also serve as a foundation for the more advanced Middle School Bells group. Opportunities to advance to the Middle School Bells will be based on an individual's musical development, as determined by the director. Carillon Ringers will ring at 9:00 AM Sunday worship at least twice each semester, and at Choir School events.

Rehearsals on Wednesdays, 4:30 PM - 5:15 PM

Middle School Bells: Middle School Bells is for ringers in grades 5-8. This ensemble will be guided by a version of the RSCM VOICE *for* LIFE curriculum modified for handbells. They will ring mostly level 1 and 2 handbell repertoire, study music theory, and develop their handbell ringing technique. 5-8 Bells will ring about once a month at 9:00 AM Sunday worship and at Choir School events.

Rehearsals on Wednesdays, 5:45 PM - 6:30 PM

High School Bells: High School Bells is for ringers in grades 9-12. This ensemble will continue the RSCM VOICE *for* LIFE curriculum modified for handbells. They will ring mostly level 2 and 3

handbell repertoire, continue their studies of music theory, and develop advanced handbell techniques. 5-8 Bells will ring about once a month at 9:00 AM Sunday worship and at Choir School events.

Rehearsals on Wednesdays, 7:00 PM - 7:45 PM

Piano Lab

The Piano Lab of the First Lutheran Choir School serves to support the musical development of students enrolled in the chorister program. Beginning in 1st grade, students of the Piano Lab will learn keyboard skills through a hands-on curriculum taught either in a classroom setting or individual lessons. Keyboard skills are an essential tool for learning music theory, composition, sight singing, and building a solid musical foundation on which to build other instrumental and vocal skills.

Students who wish to participate in the FLC Piano Lab will also be enrolled in the FLC Choristers or Carol Choir. The choirs and Piano Lab are intended to support one another in the musical development of the vocalists. Students should expect to spend 20-30 minutes of practice time outside of classes and lessons for at least 4 days a week. Supervised practice time in the Piano Lab will be offered Monday-Thursday 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM. This commitment is essential to progression through the program.

For the Fall of 2023-2024 2 classes of 8 students will be offered along with the option for individual lesson slots subsidized by the Piano Lab for a cost to the student of \$10. Due to limited availability, spots in the Piano Lab will be filled on a first come, first served basis.

Piano Lab classes are on Tuesday and Thursdays, 4:30 PM - 5:15 PM

Individual Lessons are scheduled directly with Matt Tylutki, Director of Children's and Youth Music.

Piano Lab open practice times are available Monday - Thursday 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM.

Parent and Student Communication

The First Lutheran Church Choir School uses the Church Center application to maintain regular and effective communication with students and parents. You can find an up to date schedule along with details about call times, special directions, and other information. When registered for ensembles in the First Lutheran Church Choir School students and parents will automatically be added to the appropriate groups.

You will be able to access your group page through the church center app, or online at flcsf.churchcenter.com/groups/music-choir.

Event descriptions will be updated at least one week prior to the event with pertinent information such as call times, meeting locations, and materials needed.

You may also subscribe to group calendars to add events to your personal calendar. [Click here to view a guide](#).

2023-24 Worship Schedules by Choir

All call times are 45 minutes before the beginning of worship unless otherwise noted.

All ensembles will begin the fall semester with a retreat on Saturday, August 26, 2023 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM.

Carol Choir (K-2nd grade)

9.17.23	9:00 AM Worship	1.28.24	9:00 AM Worship
10.22.23	9:00 AM Worship	3.10.24	9:00 AM Worship
11.22.23	6:30 PM Thanksgiving Eve	3.24.24	9:00 AM Palm Sunday
12.3.23	9:00 AM Worship	3.31.24	9:00 AM Easter
12.24.23	4:30 PM Christmas Eve	5.5.24	9:00 AM Worship
		5.9.24	6:30 PM Ascension Vespers

First Lutheran Church Choristers (3rd-8th grade)

9.10.23	9:00 AM Worship	2.25.24	9:00 AM Worship
10.1.23	9:00 AM Worship	3.10.24	9:00 AM Worship
10.29.23	9:00 AM Reformation Day	3.28.24	6:30 PM Maundy Thursday
11.22.23	Sing at Area Church (TBD)	3.29.24	6:30 PM Good Friday
12.20.22	6:30 PM Wed. Advent Vespers	3.31.24	9:00 AM Easter
12.24.22	4:30 PM Christmas Eve	4.26.24 -	FLC Choir School Tour to
1.21.24	9:00 AM Worship	4.28.24	Minneapolis
2.14.23	6:30 PM Ash Wednesday	5.9.24	6:30 PM Ascension Vespers

Carillon Ringers (1st-8th grade beginning ringers)

		2.28.24	6:30 PM Wed. Lent Vespers
10.15.23	9:00 AM Worship	4.14.24	9:00 AM Worship
12.3.23	9:00 AM Worship	5.9.24	6:30 PM Ascension Vespers

Middle School Bells (5th-8th grade)

		2.14.24	6:30 PM Ash Wednesday
9.10.23	9:00 AM Worship	2.25.24	9:00 AM Worship
10.1.23	9:00 AM Worship	3.28.24	6:30 PM Maundy Thursday
11.19.23	Ring at Area Church (TBD)	4.26.24 -	FLC Choir School Tour to
12.13.23	6:30 PM Wed. Advent Vespers	4.28.24	Minneapolis
1.21.24	9:00 AM Worship	5.9.24	6:30 PM Ascension Vespers

High School Bells (9th-12th grade)

		3.6.24	6:30 PM Lent Vespers
9.24.23	9:00 AM Worship	3.24.24	9:00 AM Palm Sunday
10.15.23	9:00 AM Worship	4.26.24 -	FLC Choir School Tour to
11.19.23	Ring at Area Church (TBD)	4.28.24	Minneapolis
12.10.23	9:00 AM Worship	5.9.24	6:30 PM Ascension Vespers

The Royal School of Church Music and *VOICE for LIFE* Training Program

The First Lutheran Church Choir School is an affiliate of the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM; www.rscmamerica.org). Founded in England in 1927 by Sir Sydney Nicholson, the RSCM remains dedicated to the highest standards of music in the church. It has grown to become an international and ecumenical organization with more than 11,000 affiliates in North America, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and throughout Europe.

Two of the main offerings of the RSCM are:

1. *VOICE for LIFE*, an acclaimed structured choral training guide
2. Annual week-long summer training courses for choristers (age 10 and older) in various regional locations. Visit www.rscmamerica.org for course details. Need-based partial or full scholarships are available.

The RSCM *VOICE for LIFE* Chorister Training Program is structured in four core levels: light blue, dark blue, red, and yellow. Each level represents successive, individual achievements in vocal skills, musical understanding (theory and sight-singing), knowledge of repertoire, commitment to the choir, and special projects that help place the ministry of the choir in the broader context of our worship life. Workbooks and cards with specific targets allow choristers to work through the four levels at an individual pace. Ribbons are awarded throughout the choir season.

In the FLC Choir School, an introductory white level of the RSCM *VOICE for LIFE* Chorister Training Program is begun in the St. Cecilia Choir, and the core levels (light blue through yellow) completed in the FLC Choristers. **RSCM work time is held 6:00-6:30 on Tuesdays, 5:15-5:45 on Wednesdays, and 5:45-6:15 on Thursdays.**

RSCM Awards

Work on the ribbons of the *VOICE for LIFE* Chorister Training program in turn prepares one to take the RSCM formal exams for the bronze, silver, and gold awards. The bronze award may be taken following the completion of the dark blue ribbon, the silver following the red ribbon, and the gold

following the yellow ribbon. These exams are offered and most easily taken at the RSCM summer courses where certified RSCM examiners are already present. While it is not required, it is strongly encouraged that all participants in the FLC Choir School consider taking these exams. Just as for ribbons, adults may take these exams. Preparation requires a commitment to significant additional time for review beyond the weekly rehearsal schedule, both with the director and at home. The bronze award is worn on a green ribbon. The silver award is worn on a purple ribbon. The gold award is worn on a dark red ribbon. See www.rscmamerica.org for current award requirements.

Attendance Policies

A commitment to the choir requires regular attendance at all scheduled rehearsals, worship services, events, and retreats. **Every** single member of the choir is an important part of the choir ministry team.

Attendance will be taken promptly at the start of each rehearsal by leaders through the church center app. **Members of the FLC Choir School will be expected to maintain an attendance of at least 85% of rehearsals and services.** Sporadic attendance does not benefit the group as a whole. If a singer needs to take a sabbatical, this should be discussed with the Director of Children's and Youth Music and a specific period of time determined.

If you or your child are unable to attend a scheduled event, please contact Matt Tylutki directly via email, the church center app, text, or phone as soon as possible.

If you must be absent unexpectedly, please still notify the director after the fact. At the discretion of the director, a singer may be asked not to sing for a service due to absence at a rehearsal.

Participation in choirs is expected at Advent Vespers, Christmas Eve, Holy Week, Easter Day, and Ascension Vespers according to your choir's published schedule.

Punctuality. Singers are expected to be on time to all rehearsals and services. When circumstances require entering a rehearsal late, a child should quietly tell a helper the reason upon entering so as not to disrupt the rehearsal in progress. Singers should plan to arrive at least ten minutes before a pre-service rehearsal in order to vest for the service and gather music and other items needed. **A scheduled rehearsal time means ready to sing or ring at that time: i.e. in place with music and vested (as appropriate).**

Inclement Weather

The FLC Choir School will follow the lead of the Sioux Falls School District in cancellation of activities due to inclement weather. In the event of an early release due to inclement weather, evening rehearsals will also be canceled that day. All cancellations of rehearsals, performances, and events will be communicated via email, and text message, as well as posted on the FLC Choir school website in as timely a manner as possible.

Choir Entrance and Promotion

Registration for choirs generally occurs two times each season: In June when registration opens for the fall semester, and December when registration opens for the spring semester, according to space availability. Please contact Matt Tylutki, Director of Children's and Youth music to inquire about joining mid-semester.

Promotion within the Choir School is according to each child's progress through the *VOICE for LIFE* curriculum and individual readiness for the next choir. The Director of Children's and Youth Music will discuss fall promotions with parents at the end of the prior spring semester.

Students of the Choir School are offered individual instruction time to work through the *VOICE for LIFE* curriculum at a pace suitable for their development. The Director of Children's and Youth music will be available to meet with students one-on-one to work on specific targets in the curriculum or assess their progress.

RSCM *VOICE for LIFE* curriculum work time is on Tuesdays, 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM, Wednesdays, 5:15 PM - 5:45 PM, and Thursdays 5:45 PM - 6:15 PM.

Choir School Standards

Choir school standards are our method for tracking the consistent commitment which is necessary for meaningful participation in the FLC Choir School ensembles.

One, two, or three standards may be earned at every rehearsal, service, and concert as outlined below. Rehearsals immediately preceding services are considered part of the service.

3 standards	OUTSTANDING	<i>Focused, attentive, and working hard the whole time.</i>
2 standards	GOOD	<i>Working hard, but with some lapses in attention.</i>
1 standard	ATTENDANCE	<i>Present, but with gaps in acceptable participation.</i>

0 standards will be earned or deducted for **excused** absences.

2 standards will be deducted for **unexcused** absence (an absence with no notice given).

1 standard will be deducted from standards earned for **arriving late** or **leaving early**

Extra standards can be earned by attending Tuesday make-up rehearsals, or other musical events and concerts hosted at First Lutheran Church.

Written monthly reports will be given to students of the choir school to notify them of their progress. Standards can also be accessed at any time by students or parents/guardians through the iGradePlus gradebook described below.

To be awarded an RSCM ribbon, students of the choir school must earn the following minimum standards in addition to completing the requirements of the workbook and card. These minimum requirements reflect an average of 2 standards per appearance for the Light Blue Ribbon working towards 75% of 3 standards per appearance for the Yellow Ribbon.

Light Blue Ribbon	100
Dark Blue Ribbon	110
Red Ribbon	120
Yellow Ribbon	130

Standards are accumulated per season, and begin at 0 each fall. At the discretion of the director, standards accumulated in the previous year, not used for a ribbon, may be used early in the fall to satisfy the requirement.

VOICE *for* LIFE Progress Tracking

The First Lutheran Church Choir School will use the iGradePlus gradebook to track student's progress through the VOICE *for* LIFE curriculum. Students and parents/guardians will be able to check their progress through the curriculum, standards earned, attendance, and reports of any behavior incidents through the gradebook portal.

After registering for the FLC Choir School parents/guardians and students will be sent an invitation to sign up for parent/student portal access. After activating their account, parents/guardians/students will be able to access their gradebook at igradeplus.com.

Behavior Guidelines

The following behavior guidelines are a model for how we will work together as a choir toward a common goal with respect toward one another, and the community we serve. They will apply at all times in which we are together including rehearsals, services, concerts, retreats, recording sessions, tours, meals, parties, and recreational activities.

If a child is unable to follow one or more of the following guidelines, their parent or guardian will be contacted to take them home, and 5 standards will be deducted for the day. In the case where a child has repeated difficulty following the guidelines, the Director of Children's and Youth Music will request a meeting with their parent or guardian. They will work together to create a defined and measurable plan to help their child in meeting the guidelines. A child may be asked to leave the First Lutheran Church Choir School if they are continually unable to follow one or more of the following guidelines.

Respect for others: Students of the choir school are expected to show respect for leaders, one another, and the First Lutheran Church community. In practice this means:

- Following instructions from leaders to the best of our ability with enthusiasm
- Raising our hand and waiting to be called upon when talking in rehearsal.
- When sharing a meal we follow good table manners, and talk to our friends at a moderate volume. We also show gratitude and respect to those who cooked the meal in the way we eat, clean up, and with words of thanks.
- Treating all people with kindness at all times.
- Considering the way our words and actions may uplift or hurt others.

- Taking the time to sincerely apologize when our words or actions have hurt others or the First Lutheran Church community.
- If a problem arises, requesting a meeting outside of rehearsal with the Director of Children's and Youth music, whether formal (scheduled) or informal (a chat in the hallway), to discuss.

Respect for facilities and sacred spaces: Students of the choir school are expected to show respect for the resources, facilities, and the community that uses them. In practice this means:

- No running on the church campus, unless for a recreational game outside, or in Reformation Hall as directed by a leader.
- Caring for choir supplies such as musical scores, instruments, folders, vestments, piano lab supplies, and writing utensils. Excessive damage to individual supplies, like musical scores and choir folders, which exceeds normal wear and tear will be documented by the choir librarian and reimbursement will be requested from the individual responsible for the materials.
- Cleaning up and leaving spaces used for rehearsals, meals, games, etc. the same or better than before use.
- No unnecessary talking in or around the Sanctuary or Chapel. These are spaces which are set aside for the First Lutheran Church community to worship, pray, and praise God.
- Use of a moderate voice level in all indoor spaces, except during recreational games in Reformation Hall.

Physical safety: Physical violence or any behavior that puts another in danger of harm will not be tolerated at any time. In practice this means:

- There will be no pushing, shoving, kicking, wrestling, punching, etc.

Distractions: Students of the choir school should not bring toys, cell phones, electronic games, or other distractions into rehearsals, worship services, or performances. When using technology students will not access violent, erotic, obscene, or illegal digital materials at any time with personal or church devices while participating in choir school programming.

When in worship: Participation in and leadership of the spoken and sung liturgy is a main focus of the FLC choir school. It is expected that when in worship as a choir, choristers participate and lead the liturgy without distraction. It is also strongly encouraged to listen to the prelude, postlude, and other musical offerings, and **required** to allow others the opportunity to do so without distraction. The choirs are expected to model this behavior for the rest of the First Lutheran Church community.

After School Care

A supervised space for homework after school will be available 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays before rehearsals begin. The above behavior policies apply during this time. **If a child is unable to follow one or more of the behavior guidelines, their parent or guardian will be contacted to take them home, and 5 standards will be deducted for the day.**

Choir School Meals

Food will be provided on Tuesday and Thursday evenings by the Choir School. Tuesday meals are from 6:00 PM - 6:30 PM. Thursday meals are from 5:15 PM - 5:45 PM. All meals are served in the Fellowship Hall unless otherwise noted.

In order to help account for numbers and reduce food waste, we ask that parents RSVP their students for meals at least one week in advance. This will usually occur at the prior week's rehearsal either when dropping off or picking up your student. The meals will be available for a suggested donation of \$5. If this cost is prohibitive, alternative arrangements can be made on a case by case basis.

If you would like to help support FLC Choir School meals, donations to help cover costs are greatly appreciated, as well as volunteers to help serve and clean up. Please contact Matt Tylutki (mtylutki@ficsf.org) to make a donation or volunteer to help.

Wednesday night meals are provided by FLC Children's and Youth Ministries in Reformation Hall between 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM with a suggested donation of \$5.

Parents/Guardians will be asked to notify the FLC Choir School of any dietary restrictions when registering for choirs. We will work with parents/guardians to accommodate these restrictions when students RSVP for meals.

Please refer to the FLC Choir School behavior guidelines for mealtime etiquette and expectations.

First Lutheran Church policies and procedures for working with children

Purpose

It is the intent of First Lutheran Church to provide a safe and nurturing environment to the children and youth who attend our programs. The following policies and procedures are for the protection of our children, youth, staff, and volunteers. These procedures are designed to:

- Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, volunteers, guests, and staff
- Assist First Lutheran Church in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise and oversee activities of children and youth
- Satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members by establishing a screening process for staff and volunteers
- Reduce the possibility of false accusations of sexual abuse made against volunteers and staff

This policy shall apply to all current and future staff and volunteers who have the responsibility of supervising and/or working with children or youth or any ministry involving the care of vulnerable adults.

Policies for Children and Youth Ministry Workers

Nursery Check-in, Pickup

When a parent or guardian leaves their child(ren) for nursery care, they will complete a check-in sheet indicating the child's name and where the parents can be located within the building. A claim token will be attached to the child's clothing. The parent or guardian will be given a matching claim token that must be presented in order to pick up the child(ren).

Diaper Changing

Parents are encouraged to change diapers prior to dropping children off in the nursery; however, all approved nursery volunteers may change children's diapers. All diaper changes will be done with the door open.

Bathroom

If a younger child needs assistance in the bathroom, an approved volunteer, preferably of the same gender, may enter to assist, observing the following guidelines:

- An approved volunteer should escort the child to the bathroom and check to be sure that everything is in order. The volunteer should remain outside the bathroom door and escort the child back to the classroom. The volunteer should open the bathroom door and call the child's name if he/she is taking longer than necessary. If a child requires assistance, the volunteer should leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child. The volunteer will never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and will never go into a bathroom stall with a child and close the stall door.
- Grade school classrooms will utilize bathrooms following guidelines listed above with the exception that they do not need to be escorted. These children will utilize bathrooms with the teacher or shepherd's permission.
- We strongly encourage parents and their children to visit the bathroom prior to class.

Adult/Youth Ratio Guidelines

All staff and volunteers will have completed a First Lutheran Church Volunteer/Staff application.

Parents may be asked to assist temporarily when necessary.

- At least two workers should be in the room at all times. Rooms for children are ideally staffed with workers of both genders.
- The ministry director(s) will make regular visits to the classrooms to ensure that classrooms are properly supervised.
- The following ratios are guidelines. A minimum of two adults is understood regardless of the number of children/students present. Leadership may include one adult and one teen.
 - Nursery: one adult per 4-5 children
 - Preschool: one adult per 6-8 children
 - Elementary: one adult per 10-12
 - Middle/high school: one adult per 15 youth
- If a class is unexpectedly short-staffed, the following steps will be taken:
 - **Combining of Classes:** If practical, two classes may be combined to meet the staffing requirements. A notice will be posted for parents telling them where to pick up their children.
 - **Utilization of Parent Helpers:** If combining classes is not an appropriate option, a parent will be asked to stay to meet the staffing guidelines before

additional children will be admitted to the classroom. The teacher will assume supervisory responsibility.

- **Cancellation of Class:** Classes without adequate staffing will not commence. Additionally, programs that continually experience staffing deficiencies will be subject to review and possible cancellation.
- First Lutheran staff and volunteers will monitor facilities during activities involving children.
- First Lutheran volunteers will release minors only to a parent, legal guardian, or a preauthorized individual.
- All programs operate under an Open Door Policy—providing visual and physical access to the room at all times. Under no circumstances shall a single staff member or volunteer be alone with one or more children or youth behind a closed door that does not have visual access.

Meetings in Homes

Small groups of three or more children or youth may meet in the home of a leader or youth. Volunteers are encouraged to have more than one adult present in the home during a meeting. The volunteer shall not be alone in the home at any time with a single child or youth (other than their own) in connection with a meeting.

One-on-One Ministry

With parental permission, staff or volunteers may meet one-on-one with youth or children in a public place without the presence of another adult. A public place is a place allowing visual access to passersby and is sufficiently busy so that the participants in the meeting should expect to be observed by passersby on a frequent basis. Such locations may include a restaurant, an open office in the church building during regular business hours, or a youth's home with a parent present.

Overnight Guidelines

- The adult to youth ratio for *all* middle and high school youth overnights is one adult to seven youth. If the group includes both males and females, there must be both male and female adult leaders.
- For overnights, males and females must have separate sleeping areas.
- No adult may sleep in the same bed with a youth.
- Additional guidelines for this policy will be established by the ministry director as it relates to mission trips and other situations.

Proper Displays of Affection

We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. In order to protect the children in our care, we are implementing a touching policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone working with children and youth:

- Hugging, holding hands, and other forms of appropriate physical affection between workers and children are important for a child's development and are generally suitable in our church setting; however, the physical contact should be age and developmentally appropriate. (For example, it is generally appropriate for a 4-year-old to sit on a worker's lap, but it is not appropriate for a teenager or leader to interact this way).
- The child or student should initiate touching. It is a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based on the adult's emotional need.
- Touching and affection should only be given in the presence of other ministry staff or volunteers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present and the touching is open to observation. This rule is especially important when diapering a baby or helping a young child in the restroom.
- Touching behavior should not give the appearance of wrongdoing. Behavior of ministry staff or volunteers must foster trust at *all* times; it should be above reproach.
- Staff and volunteers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.
- Staff and volunteers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with the ministry director who oversees his/her ministry area. This will need to be recorded on a Children and Youth Abuse Incident Report immediately.

Personal Disclosure

While the personal disclosures of staff or volunteers about the challenges and difficulties that have been experienced can build rapport and trust and encourage student's honest discussion of their life situations, they should be brief and always for the benefit of the student. Staff and volunteers will not talk with students for their own support and guidance.

Discipline of Children and Youth

All interactions that serve to change a behavior should consider the child's or youth's dignity and developmental level and individual characteristics. Gentleness, respect, and understanding must guide all actions and words. Discipline will be carried out through instruction, training, and correction. Physical punishment will not be used. Staff or volunteers may contact the ministry director for assistance in dealing with disruptive children or youth. Parent(s) will be notified in situations requiring stronger discipline. How to handle:

- Try to redirect the child or youth to an appropriate activity/behavior.
- Remove the child or youth from the activity. They may re-enter when their behavior is appropriate.
- For extreme behavior problems, the child or youth will be removed from the room to be with a ministry staff person or volunteer. The child or youth may re-enter if behavior changes or will stay out of the classroom until the parent or guardian picks the child up.

Transportation of Children, Youth

When transporting children or youth for church-related programs, the following rules apply:

- Drivers must be at least 25 years old to drive church vehicles or personal vehicles for First Lutheran child and youth transportation.
- All drivers and passengers will be properly restrained with seat belts and/or car seats. Vehicles will be limited to manufacturer's specifications for capacity.
- Due to the danger of airbags, all children 12 years of age and under must ride in the back seat of the vehicle.
- State law requires children 5 years old and under 40 pounds to be restrained in a car seat.
- Volunteers or staff are discouraged from driving children or youth alone. If it is necessary to ride or drive alone with a child or teen, special care should be taken to:
 - Obtain permission from the parents.
 - Place the child in the back seat.
 - Avoid stopping the car to talk.
 - Turn on the inside light of the car if a stop must be made.
- Written parental permission, including signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts will be obtained before taking minors on trips and should provide information regarding the trip.
- Staff or volunteers who transport others in their own cars must:

- Have a valid driver's license
- Have comprehensive liability and property damage insurance
- Have had no careless exhibition driving or driving under the influence violations in the past two years
- Not use illegal drugs
- Not have any felony convictions
- Sign a statement verifying the above facts

Other

Staff and volunteers will not provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law to minors.

Disqualification

No person may be entrusted with the care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors if that person has been convicted of any of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence, or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending criminal charges for any offense outlined below. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control or oversight of minors:

- Any offense against minors as defined by state law.
- A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug-related offenses, or family violence.

Abuse and Neglect

Types of Abuse

Physical

- Includes inflicting injury other than by accidental means—punching, kicking, biting, burning, or otherwise physically harming.
- Includes placing a child in a situation where injury is likely.

Mental

- Includes emotional or psychological injury that causes, or could cause, behavioral, emotional, or mental disorders

- Includes verbal comments, actions or statement that would cause children to believe their person, emotions, physical form, family, race, background, religious background, or social status is bad, inferior, unacceptable, or shameful
- Is almost always present with other types of abuse

Sexual

- Any sexual activity with a child in any setting; the abuser may be an adult, adolescent, or another child
- May be violent or non-violent
- Is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, or developmentally ready
- May include actual or threatened touching or non-touching behavior
- Includes: fondling; oral, genital, or anal penetration; intercourse; forcible rape; pornographic pictures; obscene phone calls; exhibitionism; allowing children to view sexual activity; etc.

Staff/Volunteer Application, Screening

Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Abuse

All volunteers and staff of First Lutheran church are required to report any suspected child abuse and neglect. If they become aware of any potential abuse or neglect, they must immediately report it to the director of that ministry. If that person is unavailable, it will be immediately reported to a pastor.

Basic Steps to Be Followed in Possible Abuse Cases

- The incident will be immediately, discreetly, and confidentially reported to the ministry director.
- The church will take seriously all information regarding the incident. All information will be documented on a Children and Youth Abuse Incident Report.
- The ministry director will contact the Executive Pastor, who will determine the next steps to be implemented.
- The Executive Pastor or designee will notify parents.
- If the accused is a staff or volunteer, that person will be relieved of his or her duties pending the outcome of the investigation.
- If necessary, the Executive Pastor will consult with or refer the matter to the church's attorney.

Before staff members or volunteers begin their work at First Lutheran Church, they will complete and sign the following paperwork:

- Volunteer Application Form/Background Check Authorization Form
- Driver/Vehicle Information Form (for those driving for church activities)

At times it may be necessary for adults to volunteer on an infrequent basis. These short-term volunteers must be known to a staff member who participates in the program. These adults are not required to complete the above application process unless they begin volunteering on a more frequent/regular basis.

Background Checks

As part of the screening process, the Executive Pastor or appointed person will check with both state and national sex offender registry lists to ensure the applicant is not on either list. First Lutheran Church specifically prohibits individuals from working with children or youth if they have been convicted of a crime of sexual nature or have had a substantiated Child Protective Services investigation.

Background checks will be completed on all staff and volunteers and will be monitored by the Executive Pastor or appointed person. If any red flags arise from the background check, the Executive Pastor and the program director will work confidentially with First Lutheran's staff and/or legal counsel and insurance company to determine the applicant's future involvement.

Procedure for Training/Education of Staff, Volunteers

Annual Training and Review of Policy

All current staff and volunteers in contact with children or youth are considered approved when they have completed the appropriate application, the screening procedures related to the volunteer have been completed, the volunteer has been oriented on the policy and procedures outlined in this document, and the volunteer has been notified of the approval status. With each year of service, all volunteers will complete an Annual Renewal Application to reaffirm that their life circumstances have not changed in ways that may negatively impact their ministry participation.

Training Will Include Reminders Of

- Definitions of abuse
- Mandatory reporting

- What constitutes inappropriate conduct
- How to respond to inappropriate conduct
- Reporting procedure

Implementation

Persons responsible for coordinating the training of abuse prevention include those in the following roles:

- Pastors
- Director of Youth and Family Ministry
- Directors of Music Ministries
- Nursery Supervisor

First Lutheran Church Volunteer/Staff Application

Confidential

Volunteer/Staff Position: _____ Date: _____

Applicant Information

Name, Last _____ First _____ Middle _____

Maiden or Former Name(s) _____

Address, Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone, Home (include area code) _____ Cell _____

Email _____

Social Security Number _____ Date of Birth _____

List all states you've lived in in the past 7 years _____

Waiver/Release

I understand and agree that it is critical to the mission and ministry of First Lutheran Church that all employee and volunteers conform to the highest standards of safety, interpersonal conduct, and sexual morality. I affirm that I will strictly comply with these policies and procedures for Children and Youth Ministries, including those concerning child safety and protection. I understand and agree that failure to abide by these policies and procedures may result in my immediate dismissal or disciplinary action, all at the discretion of First Lutheran Church.

I hereby authorize First Lutheran Church to verify the information on this form. I give the Church permission to do an investigation of my background, references, criminal, or police records, including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information contained in my application and/or obtaining other information, which may be material to my qualifications for volunteer status.

I hereby release First Lutheran Church and any individual representing First Lutheran Church from any or all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may result at any time to me or my family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization.

My responses above are truthful and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand and agree that if they are not truthful and accurate, First Lutheran Church may determine that I am no longer qualified to be associated with its programs as a church volunteer or employee.

I further state that I have read this release and know the contents, and I sign this release as my own act. This is a legally binding agreement, which I have read and understand.

Print Name (Staff/Volunteer)

Signature (Staff/Volunteer)

Date