



IMMANUEL
ANGELICAN CHURCH

ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

Immanuel Anglican Church

Adopted January 2023

Immanuel Anglican Church believes that all persons should experience the church as a safe environment, free from any form of abuse. We believe that God is a refuge for the oppressed and never ignores the cry of the abused (Psalm 9:9, 12), and wants His people to participate in this work.

Sadly, abuse is a common reality in this world, *including* Christian communities. Because the church includes children and vulnerable adults, it is likely to attract predatory individuals, who often seek out high-trust environments where they might have access to vulnerable people. Abusers are strategic and smart, and often use charm, helpfulness and other tactics to manipulate others, gain trust, deceive their community and keep the abuse secret.

Although we cannot control every circumstance, Immanuel strives to create a culture that does not allow abuse to thrive by promoting healthy boundaries across our ministries, educating the church on abuse, screening who is allowed into positions of leadership and establishing the Safeguarding Advisory Team. You are invited to join our community in this holy ambition, as we embody God's compassion and work to create a place of safety for every person in the church and a sanctuary of healing and justice for survivors.

Definitions

- **“Abuse”** is an action that intentionally harms or injures another person. Abuse can occur when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g. pastor, leader, boss, mentor, supervisor, teacher, youth leader, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable. Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual or financial.
- **“Child”** means any individual under the age of twelve (12).
- **“Immanuel Leader”** means individuals serving in the following roles qualify as an “Immanuel Leader”: Rector, Clergy, Staff, Parish Council, City Group leaders and NextGen Volunteers.
- **“Immanuel Member”** is any person who has completed Immanuel’s membership process, has been accepted into the membership of this church in a public service and remains active and in good standing.
- **“Minor”** means any individual who is under the age of eighteen (18).
- **“NextGen Volunteer”** is any person who has been fully onboarded into Immanuel’s ministry to children and youth and is actively serving in that ministry.
- **“Safeguarding Team”** is the Advisory Team of the Parish Council established by this policy as a place to report any abuse, suspicion of abuse or potential misconduct by an Immanuel Leader.

Promoting Healthy Boundaries

Immanuel strives to promote a culture of respect and safety toward every person in our community. The guidelines below describe healthy interactions and should guide conduct during all Immanuel-sponsored gatherings, such as Sunday worship gatherings, classes, trainings, retreats and small group gatherings in homes.

Show respect in physical touch, space, and visibility:

- Ask before initiating touch. (e.g. “Can I give you a hug?”)
- Be considerate and respectful of others and give them appropriate personal space.

Show respect in your words:

- Determine to use words that convey the respect always due to others.
- Avoid any language that belittles or objectifies (e.g. commenting on a person’s body or sexual attractiveness).
- Avoid sexualized comments including inappropriate jokes, stories, or innuendo.

Show respect in agency and personal boundaries:

- Do not seek to control others, but rather encourage and empower others to take healthy agency in their own life.
- Avoid volunteering inappropriately intimate information or asking someone to reveal intimate details or personal information when the person is not ready or comfortable doing so.
- Give agency to others. (e.g. “Where would you be comfortable meeting up?”)
- Always respect the “no” of others in setting personal boundaries.

It is the responsibility of every person in our community to maintain appropriate boundaries with others. Those in positions of greater power and trust are expected to take responsibility for their behavior and to honor others’ boundaries.

Protecting Minors

Everyone at Immanuel, whether volunteering with our NextGen ministries or not, should stay in visible and accountable spaces with children. No one should be alone with a child who is not their own at an Immanuel-sponsored gathering.

Immanuel’s “Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth” details specific guidelines that govern the behavioral expectations for interactions with minors for our NextGen Volunteers.

Educating Immanuel's Leaders and Congregation

We recognize that it takes an entire community to prevent abuse. Immanuel's leaders and members need to be educated about the common tactics of abusers, healthy boundaries, practical ways to prevent abusers from accessing vulnerable community members and what to do when concerns arise.

Immanuel will take measures to prevent abuse through education, including but not limited to, the following:

1 - Abuse Policy

- Require Immanuel Leaders and Safeguarding Team members to read and sign this Abuse Prevention Policy.
- Require all in-coming Immanuel Members to read and sign this Abuse Prevention Policy as part of the membership process.
- Make this Abuse Prevention Policy publicly available for anyone who participates in church life.

2 - Sex Abuse Awareness Training

- Require Immanuel Leaders and Safeguarding Team members to complete sex abuse awareness training.
- Make our sex abuse awareness training available to all Immanuel Members and parents of any minor in our NextGen ministry.

Additionally, Immanuel Leaders and Members are encouraged to seek opportunities to educate themselves on matters of abuse prevention.

Screening Immanuel Leaders

Immanuel will screen its leaders to determine if any individual has a known history of sexual misconduct or violence. Immanuel may conduct follow-up screening for its leaders at periodic intervals. All written application forms, signed consents, and background check reports shall be securely stored, with access available only to authorized personnel, in order to duly protect confidentiality.

Immanuel will require the following for all Immanuel Leaders and Safeguarding Team members:

- At least two references to be contacted;

- A background check, which includes national and state sex offender registry checks, to be run every 3 years, or as deemed necessary;
- An internet and social media search; and
- An interview that includes questions related to abuse, protecting the vulnerable, and this policy.

Prohibition on Abusers in Leadership

Any person that Immanuel knows has been determined by a court of law to have abused anyone will never serve in any leadership capacity within Immanuel. Additionally, Immanuel will err on the side of caution in allowing individuals into leadership positions at the church in circumstances where there has not been an adjudication of abuse but where concerns are present.

Prohibition on Registered Sex Offenders

At this time, Immanuel will not consider allowing registered sex offenders to be associated with our church. These individuals are invited to seek fellowship at another congregation that can safely integrate them in an accountable way.

Immanuel Safeguarding Advisory Team

Immanuel's Safeguarding Advisory Team ("Safeguarding Team") is an Advisory Team of the Parish Council (as defined by section 5.8B of Immanuel's bylaws) and exists to help prevent abuse at our church by providing a clear and safe place to report any allegations of abuse by an Immanuel Leader and assisting the church in its response to abuse allegations that may occur.

The Safeguarding Team will be comprised of at least one Parish Council member and 2-3 Immanuel members; it shall include both men and women; and, to the extent possible, at least one member trained in counseling, social work or victim advocacy/recovery.

Duties of the Safeguarding Team:

- Receive and document reports of abuse, suspicions of abuse or potential misconduct by an Immanuel Leader, maintaining confidentiality except where necessary for the church to take appropriate response measures;
- Provide recommendations and assist with response measures when an allegation of abuse or misconduct has been made about an Immanuel Leader;
- Support Immanuel's Leaders with abuse and safety related questions, ; and,

- Seek to educate themselves and others at Immanuel in the areas of abuse prevention, effective responses to allegations of abuse, survivor care and restoration, and care and boundaries for perpetrators, as the team is able.

Reports to the Immanuel Safeguarding Team

Immanuel takes all allegations of abuse seriously and will work to create an environment where anyone feels comfortable raising concerns and coming forward with reports of abuse. Any person who witnesses, learns of, or experiences any abuse, suspicion of abuse or potential misconduct by an Immanuel Leader is invited to report this information to Immanuel's Safeguarding Team as soon as possible.

Contacting the Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Team can be reached by speaking to a member of the team or by emailing "safeguarding@immanuelanglican.org." Immanuel will publish information about the Safeguarding Team on its website, including its purpose, the identity of its members and how the team can be reached. Any person who prefers to report to another Immanuel Leader that they trust instead of the Safeguarding Team is welcome to do so. Any person receiving a report of abuse by an Immanuel Leader should notify the Safeguarding Team.

Not a Substitute

Nothing in this policy should be interpreted as replacing or discouraging reports to appropriate government agencies, such as the Police Department or the Department of Child and Family Services. All Illinois mandated reporters have an obligation to immediately report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to DCFS. Instructions for reporting to DCFS are contained in Immanuel's "Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth".

Recusal of Persons Accused

No person named in an allegation (or related to or intimately acquainted with a person who is named) will be involved in documenting or responding to the report of abuse.

Sensitivity to Victims

Immanuel recognizes that it is hard for victims to come forward in most circumstances and will not blame victims for struggling to come forward, delaying disclosure or other common disclosure behavior. The Safeguarding Team will do their utmost to avoid causing further harm when hearing a victim's experience and will listen with respect and support.

Immanuel Abuse Prevention Policy Acknowledgement & Agreement

I have received and read a copy of the Immanuel's Abuse Prevention Policy and understand the importance of the material in the policy.

I agree to abide by the policy while serving or working at Immanuel.

I understand that the policy may be modified by Immanuel, and I understand that it is my responsibility to review any updated policy that may be created and distributed.

Name (please print)

Position at Immanuel

Signature

Date