

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church



-Revised September 2024-

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

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SAFE CHURCH POLICY

INGERSOLL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH, Ingersoll, Ontario

1. INTRODUCTION:

A church is generally presumed to be a “safe environment” already. The often-heard excuse against screening of church employees and volunteers is that “We know our people. They would never do anything like that.” This is just not true. A fundamental responsibility of a church is proper care and stewardship of its resources, both human and material.

In 1989 “a synodical study committee found that 28% of adults in the CRC had experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and that 15% of adults in the denomination had abused another person physically, sexually, or emotionally...Thus Safe Church Ministry was given the responsibility of equipping congregations to recognize, prevent, and respond to abuse.” (The Banner, March 2021, page 15.)

2. PURPOSE:

The main purpose of a Safe Church Policy (SCP) is to create and maintain a safe and secure environment that nurtures physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of all children, youth, and vulnerable persons involved in church programs or functions.

A second purpose is to provide accountability and protection for all persons, paid and volunteer, who have contact with children, youth, or vulnerable persons.

Screening and following the policy provides some guidelines and also shows we are doing due diligence, following insurance guidelines, and it may minimize legal liability.

Each time a child is baptized we are reminded of these words of Jesus Christ: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Mark 10:14) Any forms of abuse will not be tolerated.

3. DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE:

The following definitions are given to further assist the church in understanding the types of behaviors which might constitute ungodly conduct, misuse of power, sexually inappropriate behavior, bullying, and so forth.

- **Physical abuse** is any act or omission which results in a non-accidental trauma or physical injury being inflicted on another person, whether or not it leaves a visible cut or wound, mark or bruise. It is sometimes a single event but more often a chronic pattern of behavior. It may result from severe punishment. Physically abusive acts include slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, biting, choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing, and shooting.
- **Physical neglect** is not doing what one is supposed to do to meet the physical needs of someone, (especially children), in his or her care. Neglect interferes with or prevents a person’s normal development.

- **Sexual abuse** is the exploitation of, or any sexual intimacy forced on, a person regardless of age or circumstances for sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Sexual abuse acts may or may not involve sexual contact. Examples of non-physical sexual abuse include people exposing themselves, displaying pornographic material, photographing a child for pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, “peeping Toms”, and requests to engage in sexual activity (where no physical contact occurs.) Examples of sexual abuse involving physical contact includes fondling of body parts such as breasts, crotch, buttocks, or sexual organs; intercourse; oral and anal sex.
- **Emotional abuse** is harm or threatened harm to a person’s welfare or well-being, a chronic or intentional pattern of deprivation; manipulative threats, words or actions; harassment; or unnecessary and excessive attempts to control a person’s behavior or thoughts.
- **Harassment** is any vexatious comment or conduct that is known or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome, unwanted, offensive, intimidating, hostile or inappropriate. Harassment may be subtle or overt and may include bullying, stereotyping, sexual harassment, workplace harassment and discriminatory harassment.
- **Bullying** is an ongoing deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behavior that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time, (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

- **Economic abuse** is the misuse or misappropriation of a person’s or group’s or institution’s financial resources.
- **Spiritual abuse** can involve coercion, control, or exploitation and can include aspects of verbal, emotional and/or physical abuse.
- **Financial abuse** may be subtle or overt but in general, include tactics to conceal information, limit the victims access to assets, or reduce accessibility to family or group assets; lack of transparency when dealing with funds.

All abuse can include an action followed by a request or threat to the individual not to tell anyone what happened, not to report the incident, or not to show anyone a mark or bruise.

4. GENERAL MINISTRY GUIDELINES

for programs with CHILDREN, YOUTH, and VULNERABLE PERSONS:

For the purpose of this policy, "STAFF" refers to anyone in a paid position. "VOLUNTEER" includes all leaders, assistants, and attendants 18 years of age and up, as well as elders, deacons and any others who are involved in church programs, leadership and/or finances.

ALL INDIVIDUALS IN A POSITION OF TRUST MUST BE FULLY SCREENED.

The church will rely on personal information forms, interviews, references and police record checks in the screening process for volunteers and staff. Such procedures assist the church in attempting to maintain the safety and well-being of the individuals entrusted to its care.

- All volunteers, leaders, elders, deacons, and staff are urged to participate in training/information sessions. All must do a mandatory annual review of the Safe Church Policy, and be aware of how to respond to allegations of child abuse. The Covenant of Care must then be signed by minors (under 18) and the Code of Conduct for adults (18+) annually.
- Ministry coordinators are to review the Safe Church Policy with their volunteers and assistants at the beginning of the program season, and when needed, and have them complete the Covenant of Care or Code of Conduct. These will be turned in to the Safe Church Team for review and filing.
- Staff and volunteers are asked to submit a Service Profile as well as a Police Check for the vulnerable sector. Police checks must be redone every 5 years as requested by the insurance company. In addition, they must review the Safe Church Policy annually and sign a Covenant of Care or Code of Conduct annually.
- Any applicant new to the church or community must also provide the names of 3 references, such as an employer, friend, and colleague, who will be contacted by a member of the Safe Church Team (Safe Church Team) or other supervisor.
- Safe Church Representatives will provide a copy of the SCP in the hallway beside the phone and mailboxes. The Safe Church Policy is also found on our church website (www.ingersollcrc.ca)
- Safe Church Team will obtain lists of the heads of each ministry and provide the pertinent forms.
- The Safe Church Team will be responsible for safeguarding the information received, and shall take all reasonable precautions such that the information will only be used for the purpose of screening volunteers and employees. Such documentation will be made available only to the Program Leaders, the Safe Church Team and designated church staff as required.
- Safe Church Team will review all Incident Reports and keep them in a secure file.
- Safe Church Team will review and update the policy as needed.
- The church council must approve all applicants for volunteer and staff positions. Council has the right to refuse an applicant.
- The giving or accepting of gifts of an intimate nature, or of money is not acceptable.
- If a person is a known sex offender, then never will he/she be able to volunteer with any of the child or youth programs of the church.

- If a leader/assistant is suspected of abusing a child or vulnerable person, then he/she must take a leave of absence from their role until an investigation has been completed. If, after an investigation has been concluded, it is determined that the person involved is abusing a child, the person will immediately be dismissed from his/her current role.
- A volunteer or church leader removed or dismissed from their position or office should not be considered for re-entry or reinstatement without the advice of legal counsel.
- Sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual, or financial abuse of a parishioner by a volunteer or church leader will not be tolerated.
- **Any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, (or if a child or youth has disclosed abuse) must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society.**
 - **The Oxford County number is 519-539-6176 or 1-800-250-7010.**
 - **Ingersoll OPP number is 519-485-6554**
 - **OPP Non-Emergency number is 1-888-310-1122.**

5. DISCIPLINE POLICY:

As adults, it is important that we model Christ-like behavior. By our example we can teach children and youth what is acceptable. An adult can stop unacceptable behavior of a person by intervening with a constructive form of discipline. The following provides some guidelines about how to administer discipline in church-sponsored programs, thus avoiding abuse or accusations of abuse towards others.

TWO ADULTS RULE: Have two people present for all programs involving children 5 years of age and younger. The two-person rule is preferred for all other programs as well, but is not always feasible. All programs should be open-door or visible through a window for supervisors to monitor.

- **Education:** Expectations of a minor's behavior and applied discipline must take into consideration the age and level of comprehension of the individual. Children are to be reminded of the kind of behavior that is acceptable for the setting. Appropriate forms of discipline are to be reviewed with leaders/assistants before church-sponsored programs begin each new season. Additional review may be done as needed.
- **Parental Involvement:** Parents/guardians are to be informed and involved whenever a person misbehaves beyond prescribed intervention strategy or if a pattern of misbehavior increases. Concerns about a child's behavior should also be reported to the program supervisor. If not resolved satisfactorily at this level the supervisor and leader/assistant together should approach an elder, safe church rep, or pastor. A possible solution could include an assistant or parent to be involved in the classroom weekly if the behavior is an ongoing problem.
- **Intervention Strategies:** Whenever possible, leaders/assistants should intervene by choosing one or more of the following: --Distract the child with another activity; --Help the child focus on another more acceptable behavior; --Isolate the child from others if another leader/assistant is available to assist.

Leaders/assistants should only use physical restraint with a child when he/she is in danger of hurting themselves or others. Leaders will ask for assistance when a child behaves in a manner that requires restraint. The child's parent(s)/guardians will be notified immediately and the child may be removed from the class until a parent/guardian arrives. The program supervisor must be informed of the concern and an incident report will be completed.

For young children, time-out should not last longer in minutes than the age of the child. For example, a three-year-old should not have to sit for a time-out longer than three minutes.

When interventions do not work, leaders/assistants should get help before “losing their cool”. This may include the leader/assistant leaving the room to get help.

Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, pushing, pinching, etc.) is not permitted.

Abusive verbal discipline (yelling, hurling insults, threatening words, etc.) is not permitted.

Volunteers and staff will participate in an information and/or training program annually and when needed.

RISK PREVENTION POLICIES:

6. NURSERY:

- Minors may volunteer for service, provided that an adult is present. Minors are not to care for children without adult supervision.
- One adult, 18+ years, and one other attendant, 12+years, may serve in the nursery at one time. All attendants should sign in, including the date, when serving, so a record is kept should there ever be an allegation of abuse. Only one adult member of a family should serve in the nursery at any given time. A couple (e.g. a husband and wife, parent and child, or siblings) should **not** serve in the nursery at the same time.
- There must be a ratio of at least 2 adults for every 10 children.
- Parents/guardians must sign-in a child, including child’s name, concerns, allergies, etc.
- Nursery doors must have a window or unobstructed view of the room.
- There is a bathroom in the nursery. If a child requires assistance, the door must remain ajar; otherwise, the adult must wait outside the bathroom.
- Changing of diapers of infants and toddlers must be done in view of another attendant.
- A nursery child should only be released to a parent/guardian at the end of the service.
- If a child is injured or needs medical attention the parent/guardian should be notified immediately. An incident report must be fully completed, and the nursery coordinator must be notified. The incident report will be reviewed and filed by the Safe Church Team.
- Any time a nursery worker suspects physical or sexual abuse of a child, it should be reported to the coordinator, and rules for reporting should be followed.
- An individual check-in/check-out system must be used for all parents/guardians and children. The parent/guardian (or a family member 14+) that has signed the child in, will be the only person able to pick up their child at the end of the service.
- Only adults and teenagers are allowed to carry babies less than one year of age.
- If a child cries uncontrollably for more than 10 minutes and cannot be comforted, the parent/guardian should be informed.
- **All Safe Church Policies apply to the nursery program.**

- Completed attendance records for nursery attendants and children must be turned in to the Safe Church Team for filing at the end of each fiscal year.

7. CHILDREN'S MINISTRY, CHURCH SCHOOL, and VBS:

- Only one adult member of a family should serve in a classroom at any given time. A husband and wife, parent and child or siblings should not serve together in the same classroom.
- Attendance sheets must be completed for all classes, including leaders/assistants, and dates. These will be turned in to the Safe Church Team at the end of each fiscal year and filed.
- A Registration form must be filled out for each child.
- Whenever children's worship, church school or VBS is in session, the worship center or classroom door must allow for an unobstructed view of the room.
- When Church School for ages 3, 4, and 5 is in session, two leaders/assistants, including at least one adult, should be present. If this is not possible, one of the leaders should be at least 16+years of age and a hall monitor should be in place.
- Only female adults may assist children ages 5 or younger with bathroom needs. The adult should check the bathroom to be sure it is empty before letting little children in. She should wait outside the bathroom for the child. If the child requires assistance, the door should be left ajar. Children will be encouraged to use the bathroom facilities before and after class.
- Children should not leave the worship center or classroom except for illness, bathroom needs, or other compelling needs.
- If a child is injured or in need of medical attention, the parent/guardian should be notified immediately. An incident report must be fully completed and the program coordinator is to be notified. The incident report will be reviewed by the Safe Church Team and kept on file.
- Appropriate display of affection is often a part of conveying support and encouragement to one another. Displays of affection between teacher and student should be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-handed pat on the back, a handclasp or handshake, a hi-five, or a light touch on the forearm. Displays of affection should be restricted to public places. A student's or teacher's right to refuse any of these will be respected.
- Preschool children should be released to their parent/guardian at the end of class. This will prevent any youngster from wandering away and being lost.
- **The Safe Church Policy applies to all these programs.**
- When the outside portable is in use, there should never be one leader alone with one student. A second teacher must be available if only one student is present, and a second student must be in the room if there is only one leader.

8. GEMS and CADETS:

- Leaders/assistants will provide adequate supervision of the children. Each Cadet and GEMS function will be supervised by at least two persons, an adult leader and/or another volunteer that has been approved by our church council.
- Club leaders should obtain signed parental/guardian consent forms, with information on each child, including any allergies, medical concerns the leader must be aware of, permission to join in weekly activities, and names and phone numbers of whom to contact in case of an emergency.
- Attendance will be taken of the children and counsellors, and dated. This will occur at each meeting, and sheets will be given to the Safe Church Team for filing at the end of the fiscal year. If there are guests their information needs to be written down before the meeting begins.
- A leader/assistant and child may meet for one-on-one contacts only in public spaces. (Public place being somewhere where they can easily be observed with a door ajar, or in a main area.) One-on-one contacts should not be a consistent practice. For frequent such contacts, whenever possible, parents/guardians should be notified. If it is not in the best interest of the child to notify the parent/guardian, the club coordinator should be notified.
- When the outside portable is in use, there should always be at least 2 students to one counsellor, or 2 leaders with one student. There should never be one student and one leader alone.
- If a child is injured or needs significant medical attention, the parent/guardian should be notified immediately. An incident report must be fully completed, and the program coordinator must be informed. The incident report will be reviewed by the Safe Church Team and kept on file.
- Bathrooms should be monitored regularly.
- Club members should not arrive more than 10 minutes before the start of the class, nor should they stay longer than 10 minutes after the class is finished.
- Any tools used must be in good repair and done safely and with adequate adult supervision.
- Club activities that take place away from the church facility, out of town, or overnight should be conducted in compliance with the Safe Church Policy. The parent/guardian must give written consent for the minor to participate in these activities. These functions require the approval of the program leader.
- Sleepovers, camping or other overnight events should only be allowed when ALL supervisors and volunteers are fully screened.
- While the appropriate display of affection between leaders and a child is an important part of conveying support and encouragement to one another, such displays can be misinterpreted. Examples of appropriate displays of affection are a brief hug, a handclasp, a hi-five, an arm around the shoulder, an open-handed pat on the back, or a light touch of the forearm. A leader/assistant or child has the right to refuse such a display of affection which should be respected.
- **All Safe Church Policies apply to the GEMS and Cadet programs.**

9. CATECHISM and YOUTH GROUPS:

- Youth groups and Catechism leaders/assistants should follow the Triangle rule: 2 adults with one youth, or at least 2 youth with one leader. If only 1 leader meets with 1 youth, such meeting should occur in a public space (e.g. door ajar or in a main area.) This should not be a consistent practice. For longer contacts alone, the parent/guardian should be notified as well as the program supervisor.
- Leaders are to have information about all youth available each week. If there are guests their information should be added before the meeting begins.
- While the appropriate display of affection is often part of conveying support or encouragement to one another, such displays of affection can be misinterpreted. Therefore, displays of affection between adults and youth should be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-handed pat on the back, a handclasp, hi-five, handshake, or a light touch to the forearm. Restrict these displays to a public area. A youth leader's or a youth's right to refuse any display of affection must be respected.
- Regardless of relative ages, it is never appropriate for a youth group leader and a youth member to date each other. No persistent gift-giving, phone calls, emails or letters of a personal nature should be directed to a youth member by a leader or vice-versa.
- Written permission from parents/guardians must be obtained before all sleepovers, camping, and off-premise or overnight events.
- ALL supervisors, chaperones and volunteers must be fully screened prior to sleepovers, camping and off-premise or overnight events.
- If a youth is injured or needs medical attention, the parent/guardian should be notified immediately. An incident report must be fully completed, and the program coordinator notified. The Incident Report will be reviewed by the Safe Church Team and kept on file.
- **All Safe Church policies apply to youth programs.**
- Completed weekly attendance sheets, which includes the counsellors/volunteers and dates, will be handed in to the Safe Church Team at the end of each season for filing.

10. FRIENDSHIP:

- There must be at least two adults in attendance with the group at all times.
- All leaders/assistants should be fully screened, as well as approved by the Friendship Coordinator. (because of community involvement.)
- Leaders are to have information about all of the attendees available each week. If there is a guest, their information needs to be written down before the meeting begins.
- Attendance records must be completed at every meeting, including the names of Friends as well as leaders/volunteers and dates. These will be turned in to the Safe Church Team for filing, at the end of each season.
- The parents/legal guardians must be informed and give written consent for any off-site function. If a leader/volunteer is required to transport a Friend to or from an event, the parent/guardian must be provided with the name of the driver, the time of pickup and the time of return.
- All one-on-one sessions must be held in a public place in full view of others.
- Isolated one-on-one chats are discouraged.
- If assistance is required in toileting, the washroom door should be kept slightly ajar or another leader should be informed.
- Displays of affection between a leader and Friend should be limited to a brief hug, arm around the shoulder, open-handed pat on the back, a hi-five, or a handshake. These displays of affection should be restricted to public places. A leader/assistant or Friend has the right to refuse a display of affection and this should be respected.
- If a Friend is injured or needs medical attention, the parent/guardian should be notified immediately. An incident report must be fully completed and the program coordinator must be notified. The report will be reviewed by the Safe Church Team and kept on file.
- In the event of a violent act, restraint must be a non-violent intervention. When possible, call for assistance of another adult. Safety of all involved is paramount. Should the victim fall to the ground, any restraint must be released immediately. Call 911 if the situation warrants it. An incident report must be fully completed. Parent/guardian must be notified. The program supervisor must be notified. The incident report will also be reviewed by the Safe Church Team and filed.
- **All Safe Church Policies apply to this program.**

11. PASTORAL and CHURCH MINISTRIES:

- All pastors, care team workers, elders, deacons and other volunteers who work with or visit vulnerable persons must be screened with a police check, review and abide by the Safe Church Policy, as well as submit a Service Profile and sign the Code of Conduct.
- There will be mindfulness by those in authority towards making everyone in their care comfortable. For example, where there is a difference in gender, age, size or knowledge, compared to those in their care who are of less physical, intellectual, and/or emotional power. This will include attitude, speech, volume, gestures and expressions towards that person.
- A team approach is preferred for all ministries.
- Pastoral care workers, elders, deacons and pastors should exercise good judgment when visiting alone with parishioners of the opposite sex in the privacy of their own home or office.
- It is wise to use public places such as restaurants for one-on-one meetings.
- Pastor's offices should be equipped with a window in the door and open blinds for one-on-one visits.
- Consider requesting that a same-sex elder or pastoral care worker be assigned to someone who needs frequent pastoral visits.
- One may also consider asking if they can bring a spouse with them to prevent one-on-one concerns.
- Be cautious with touch. Hugs can be misconstrued as meaning more than the giver or receiver intended. For some, hugs are an invasion of personal space and are unwelcome. Both parties should be mindful and respectful of this.
- Do not borrow money from, or loan money to, a member.
- Do not give or accept gifts of a personal or intimate nature. This could be a misinterpretation of affection.
- Observe technological boundaries.
- Always think defensively and err on the side of caution.
- Elders, deacons and pastors should report all pastoral visits to their respective coordinating bodies.
- **All Safe Church Policies apply to those involved in ministry.**
- Accountability is not a hassle—it is a necessity.
- Council shall assign an elder or deacon to monitor the halls during church services. This includes helping latecomers, looking into Sunday School rooms, and watching people roaming the halls. Monitoring sheets are to be filled in at each service, and include the name of the monitor, the date and rooms checked. These will be kept in a binder and be turned in to the Safe Church Team at the end of the year.

12. TRANSPORTATION POLICY:

- This policy applies to adults, while serving in ministry to children, youth, Friends or seniors who may receive transport for any of the above in the course of church-sponsored programs.

- Two adults must be present and seated in the front of the vehicle when transporting youth or children.
- If there is only one adult in the vehicle, there must be at least two children in the back seat.
- Drivers must log-in each pick-up and drop-off; logs should be turned in to the program supervisor.
- Adults must have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance before transporting others. Vehicles must be in good repair. Drivers who routinely transport others will have their driving record reviewed prior to the beginning of each church year.
- No tobacco or vaping products shall be used in the vehicle.
- No alcoholic beverages shall be allowed in the vehicle.
- No driver shall have consumed any alcoholic beverage for at least 12 hours prior to driving the vehicle.
- The driver shall have complete authority over the passengers and full responsibility for the safety of the passengers at all times.
- Drivers must abide by state and provincial requirements for car seat use, seatbelts and air bag safety.
- All drivers must adhere to the distracted driving laws. (e.g. cell phone use, radio, CD's etc.)
- The driver and all passengers are to wear seat belts whenever the vehicle is in service. Drivers may not transport more passengers than available seat belts.
- Car seats must be available for younger children.
- Children less than 12 years of age may not sit in the front seat if there is a passenger side air bag which is not disabled.
- Adults or minors who transport related members to church-sponsored events are not subject to this policy.
- The transportation policy does not extend to parents or guardians who request or give permission for a minor with a valid driver's license to transport non-related passengers.
- **All Safe Church Policies apply to this program.**

13. SOCIAL MEDIA:

- Ministry leaders using texting will normally contact youth in a closed-group format.
- When emailing youth correspondence should be copied to the ministry coordinator.

- Youth leaders will refrain from using other electronic communications with minors, such as blogging, twitter, Instagram, snapchat, Facebook, Pinterest, What's App, or the next new thing.
- Communication normally should occur between 8 am and 9 pm.
- Content should be restricted to facts, not feelings.
- Questions should be kept simple, requiring only a "yes" or "no" answer.
- All obscene or bad language, bullying, off topic discussions and discrimination is prohibited. Any concerns of such conduct will be addressed by the program coordinator.
- Photos taken for the purpose of internal poster board displays or internal power point presentations are not part of social media. Consent from a parent/guardian is required when the photo is of a person under 18 years of age.

14. ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURE:

Church leaders and volunteers should be aware to recognize signs and symptoms of neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse. The following outline is to assist in learning how to respond to a child's report of an abusive experience, or if there are reasonable grounds that a child needs protection.

- Any person, including but not limited to ministry personnel, who observes signs and symptoms of abuse should fill out an incident report fully and report their findings to the program supervisor as well as to the Safe Church Team.
- Any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is, or may be in need of protection, or if a child or youth has disclosed abuse, must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the police and to **Children's Aid Society, (CAS), of Oxford County, at 519-539-6167 and 1-800-250-7010. The 24-hour phone number for the OPP is 519-485-6554 and 1-888-310-1122.**
- Any member of a church community is subject to the civic duty to report under the Child and Family Services Act, Section 72 (1) which states that if a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, that person must promptly report the suspicion and information upon which it is based to a CAS. A person who knowingly fails to report these circumstances is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offense.
- The accused and the victim should not be confronted by anyone other than the CAS staff or the Police for any information. Doing so may harm the possible legal case against the abuser. Absolutely no public statements are to be made without legal counsel or any admission of legal liability.
- The person who made the report to the police and CAS should also inform the Safe Church Team as soon as possible. The reporter must keep all information confidential. An incident report must be fully completed and reviewed and kept on file with the Safe Church Team.
- If the suspected abuse happened in the context of church ministries or was committed by a church member or attendee, the next-of-kin of the victim must be notified by the senior pastor or church leader. The situation is not to be discussed with anyone, staff or other parents. All information regarding the victim and alleged perpetrator is to be kept confidential.
- The alleged abuser of a minor will be suspended immediately from their position with the church until the investigation is complete. If found guilty, he/she will be dismissed from their leadership

position. Such a person shall never again hold a leadership position in the church's children or youth programs again. The church will notify and work in conjunction with denominational leadership in any and all allegations of, or suspicions of abuse that may have happened in church ministry.

- The church will notify legal counsel as well as their Insurance Agency of any incidents.
- The church will assure a compassionate response to the alleged victim and his/her family.
- Incident reports will be kept with the Safe Church Team. A note will be added to the appropriate Service Profile for reference of the incident. These reports will be filed and kept confidential.

15. RESPONDING/REPORTING ABUSE CHECKLIST: with sample responses.

- Believe the child or youth or vulnerable person...*"I'm sorry this has happened to you. I believe you."*
- Listen openly and calmly. Don't deny the problem.
- Reassure the child or youth...*"I'm glad you told me. You did the right thing. It's not your fault. We will get some help for you."*
- Do not promise the victim that you will not tell anyone.
- If an allegation of abuse comes forward, or a child is in a dangerous situation, the child may be kept in a safe place at the church, if appropriate, and a plan developed with CAS and/or police as to what to do next.
- Do not attempt to obtain further information from the child unless directed by police or CAS. This should be left to professionals who are trained to deal with these cases.
- Do not frighten the child with talk about the police or medical examination.
- If appropriate, you may pray with the child.
- Any suspected abuse involving a minor should be reported to the authorities.
- Fully complete an incident report, including as many details as possible. Document all interactions, comments and observations clearly and precisely, continuing on the back of the page if needed. This information may become part of a legal proceeding. Reports are located beside the phone and the mailboxes in the hallway. The Incident Report or a true copy will be given to the Safe Church Team and filed.
- Consult with the Program Coordinator as well as the Safe Church Team. Everyone will maintain confidentiality.
- The Classical Safe Church Representative will be a good resource person to guide the church through this event.
- Legal Counsel and Ingersoll CRC's insurance provider will be notified.

RESPONSE DUTIES by the Safe Church Team include:

- Meet with any volunteer or staff who has questions about a possible report of child abuse.
- Notify the pastor or chair of council of any reports the Safe Church Team receives.

- Notify the church's insurance agent and legal counsel whenever a reasonable suspicion of child abuse is reported to police officials and CAS.
- Assign a member of the committee who will deal with media enquiries arising in any way from the report of child abuse to police officials and CAS.
- Assign members of the congregation to a pastoral team for the individuals and families who are party to the allegations. This should only occur after careful consultation with legal counsel.
- (There was a recent case where a church and its elders were found to be negligent because of the way an allegation of abuse was handled. In that case, the church encouraged the abused person to confront her father, (the alleged abuser). The court found that, as a result of the way it was handled, there was further emotional damage caused to the abused individual. Be very careful.)
- If deemed necessary, the Safe Church Team will assign members to conduct an independent investigation of child abuse against an appointed volunteer or compensated staff only. Allegations outside of the church programs and facilities are not the domain of the Safe Church Team.
- Determine whether the Safe Church Team or the first-hand reporter maintains a liaison with police officials or CAS.
- Remember that the Classical Safe Church Representative is always there to assist and advise.

16. DISABILITY POLICY:

In keeping with biblical teachings, with our doctrinal standards, and with various decisions of the synods of the Christian Reformed Church of North America regarding people with disabilities, we, the council of Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church, adopt the following policy.

- In this church of Christ, we value people with disabilities, like all other people, as created in the image of God, as partners to His covenant and as subjects in His kingdom.
- We consider all people, those with and without disabilities, to have gifts from the Holy Spirit, and we encourage them all to enrich congregational life by practicing their faith and using their gifts and talents in worship, service, study, and leadership.
- We will endeavor to integrate people with disabilities into all programs and activities sponsored by the church. This includes worship services, church education, support groups, study, and prayer groups, book clubs, sports activities, etc.
- We will ascertain and attend to the special spiritual, physical, and psychological needs of those affected by disabilities, and will offer training to members to deal with disability issues and to raise awareness in our congregation, as needs are identified.
- We will modify any policy, practice, procedure or architecture that tends to exclude people with disabilities from any aspect of congregational life.

17. VOLUNTEER EXCEPTIONS:

An exception to the six-month minimum waiting period should be made only for volunteer applicants in the following circumstances:

- Transferring from another church of the same denomination in which they have been long-time members and children’s ministry workers in good standing, but only if they are fully screened, including a criminal record check and background references. A minimum of three background references is required, including one from their previous pastor/children’s ministry director and to whom they have been well known for a period of at least one year.
- Known volunteers who attend other churches in the community who have been long-time members and children’s ministry workers in good standing, but only if they are fully screened, including a criminal record check and background references from at least three individuals. This includes a reference from their current minister or children’s ministry director to whom they have been well known for a period of at least one year.
- New and returning counsellors, supervisors or volunteers in seasonal Christian ministries such as summer camping programs and short-term missions should only be approved if they are fully screened, including a criminal record check and background references from at least three individuals. This includes at least one reference from their current home church minister or the executive director at an organization where they previously served in children’s ministry and to whom they have been well known for a period of at least one year.

18. WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE:

What to look for when abuse is occurring:

- **Physical abuse** often leaves marks, and can be easier to identify than sexual or emotional abuse or neglect. These may include unexplained bruises and welts, and may be in various stages of healing. Unexplained burns can reflect a pattern indicative of cigarette, electrical appliance, immersion or rope burns. Other unexplained injuries may include lacerations, abrasions, human bite marks or pinch marks, as well as loss of hair/bald patches, retinal hemorrhage or abdominal injuries.
 - Behavioral indicators may include requests or feelings of deserving physical punishment. One may be afraid to go home and/or request to stay in school, day care, etc. One may be overly shy, tending to avoid all physical contact with adults, especially parents. One may display behavioral extremes, either withdrawal or aggression. One may suggest that other children be punished in a harsh manner, cry excessively or just sit and stare. One may report injury made by a parent, or give unbelievable explanations for their injuries.
- **Sexual abuse** is often not reported by children. They rely on adults to be aware of specific physical and behavioral indicators. The most reliable indicator of child abuse is the child’s verbal disclosure. Some indicators of abuse include somatic complaints, including pain and irritation of the genitals; sexually transmitted disease; pregnancy in young adolescents; frequent unexplained sore throats, yeast infections, or urinary tract infections.
 - Behavioral indicators may include excessive masturbation in young children; sexual knowledge of behavior beyond that expected for the child’s age; depression, suicidal gesture; chronic runaway; frequent psychosomatic complaints, such as headaches and stomach-aches; drug or alcohol abuse; avoidance of undressing or wearing excessive layers of clothing; sudden avoidance of certain familiar places; marked decline in school performance.
- **Emotional abuse** may be less obvious than other forms of maltreatment. Emotional abuse may be suspected when a child exhibits impaired development, destructive behavior, or chronic somatic

complaints that cannot be explained medically or circumstantially. Some indicators may include eating disorders; sleep disturbances, nightmares; wetting or soiling by school-age children; speech disorders, stuttering; failure to thrive; development lags; asthma, severe allergies, or ulcers.

- Behavioral indicators may include habit disorders, such as biting, rocking, head banging, thumb sucking in an older child; poor peer relationships; behavioral extremes (overly compliant or demanding, withdrawn or aggressive); self-destructive behavior, oblivious to hazards or risks; chronic academic under-achievement; irrational and persistent fears, dreads, or hatreds.
- **Neglect**—Keep in mind that cultural standards may differ from those prevailing in a community and are not necessarily signs of neglect. Indicators may include height and weight significantly below age level with no plausible explanation; inappropriate clothing for the weather; poor hygiene, including lice, body odor or scaly skin; a child abandoned or left with inadequate supervision; untreated illness or injury; lack of safe, warm, sanitary shelter; lack of necessary medical and dental care.
 - Behavioral indicators may include begging for, or stealing, food; assuming adult responsibilities; falling asleep in school, lethargic; repeated acts of vandalism; poor school attendance, frequent tardiness; chronic hunger; dull, apathetic appearance; running away from home; reports of no caretaker in the home.
- **Spiritual abuse** happens when someone uses spiritual or religious beliefs to hurt, scare or control someone. It can involve someone forcing another to participate in spiritual or religious practices when he/she does not want to.
- **Financial abuse** is fraudulently using money which is not yours, whether from a group or from an individual.



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(519) 485-4941



SAFE CHURCH REQUEST FOR SCREENING FORMS

Dear:

Date:

Thank you for volunteering/working at Ingersoll CRC, whether helping with clubs or in any leadership position. To satisfy our Safe Church Policy and our insurance provider we ask you to submit a Service Profile, a Police Check, to review our Safe Church Policy and then complete the Covenant of Care (minors) and the Code of Conduct (adults). (Each team leader has a copy and you can also find extra copies beside the mailboxes).

This procedure not only ensures a safe environment for everyone but also serves to protect you from unfounded allegations. Together we can provide a safe and secure atmosphere for those who are vulnerable, as well as practice due diligence.

Forms requested: –Service Profile – done once.

–Police Check – renew every 5 years--done online only

–Covenant of Care (minors) – renewed annually

–Code of Conduct (adults) – renewed annually

These forms will be kept on file indefinitely with Safe Church.

Please return the completed forms to the Safe Church mailbox or to the Safe Church Coordinator ASAP.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter.

The Safe Church Team



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SERVICE PROFILE Pt1

To whom it may concern:

A completed service profile must be on file for each person who is in a ministry position at this church. A criminal check is also required for all volunteer and paid staff.

Thank you for your interest in becoming involved in the ministry of ICRC. Please complete this profile to the best of your ability. Thank you.

Name:

Date of Birth:

Email address:

Phone number:

Cell:

How long have you attended ICRC?

Member?

In which programs are you interested in serving?

List any previous ministry programs you have been involved in.

List previous volunteer experiences in the community.

List any skills and experience you have which would enhance the ministry.

Are you certified for CPR?

Date:

Are you trained for First Aid?

Do you have a valid Driver's License?

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence for which you have not been pardoned?

Please list where you have been worshipping regularly during the past 5 years.



SERVICE PROFILE Pt2

If you have been attending ICRC less than 6 months, please provide the names of 3 references (not related to you). This could include a pastor or ministry leader.

- | 1. Name: | Phone: | Relationship: |
|----------|--------|---------------|
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |

Applicant's Statement:

The information I have provided is correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that my name will be submitted to the council of ICRC for the purpose of affirming my character and fitness for the programs of this church. I agree to serve spiritually and with integrity. I will participate in training to enhance my service within the church. I have read and understand ICRC Safe Church Policy, agree to its requirements and will adhere to them. My signature acknowledges my understanding and adherence with this policy. I allow the church to follow-up with the references provided.

PRINT Name:

Signature:

Date:

PRINT Witness Name:

Signature:

Date:



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COVENANT OF CARE

To whom it may concern:

I promise, in all my relationships with children, youth or vulnerable persons to follow safe church practices, which includes, but is not limited to:

1. Appropriate physical contact
2. Appropriate language
3. Free of bias
4. Free of harassment
5. Free of bullying
6. Free of cyber abuse

I will handle any funds received by me, for activities, with honesty and stewardship.

I will respect confidentiality, unless a minor is in danger of abuse; and will report to Child Protection Services or the Police, as required by law.

I have read and understand Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church's Safe Church Policy, and agree to its Covenant of Care. I understand that my failure to adhere to the policy could result in a suspension from services within this church. There is a zero tolerance for abuse or neglect.

PRINT full name:

Signature:

Date:

PRINT Witness Name:

Signature:

Date:



Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders

As approved by synod, June 2023

Code of Conduct

“Ministry leaders” are all office bearers (ordained ministers, commissioned pastors, elders, and deacons), CRCNA staff members, and members of the Council of Delegates. Local church councils are also encouraged to regard all church staff (whether or not they are ordained) and volunteers who are providing leadership in the church as ministry leaders. Ministry leaders have been empowered by God and the church to serve the body of Christ for good. They are called to resist all temptations to abuse their power through the misuse of position, authority, or influence.

Abuse of power is often defined as misusing power to harm another person or using power and influence to take unjust advantage of another person. All abuse by ministry leaders within the church is also spiritual abuse and has spiritual impacts that often heighten the harm caused to individuals and to the family of God. For more on the use and misuse of power, see the report of the Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 587-615).

As a ministry leader, I will, to the best of my ability, commit to the following:

Relationships

1. I will speak and act, in all my personal and professional relations, in ways that follow the pattern of Christ, who used his power to serve (1 Pet. 5; Mark 10; Phil. 2; 2 Tim. 4:2).
2. I will respect, love, and treat with integrity and truthfulness people of every position, status, race, ethnicity, gender, age, or ability.
3. I will maintain appropriate emotional, physical, and sexual boundaries in all relationships.
4. I will keep all my relationships free from inappropriate, unwanted physical contact, emotional or sexual intimacy, sexual comments, gestures, or jokes.

Safety

1. I will actively promote a welcoming and respectful environment where all persons are treated with dignity and value, and where any form of abuse, bullying, or harassment is neither tolerated nor allowed to take place.
2. I will report known or suspected cases of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect of minors or vulnerable adults to the proper authorities.
3. I will support those who disclose physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in a way that empowers the person who has been victimized to seek out justice and healing.

Pastoral Leadership

1. I will promote truthfulness, transparency, and honesty in all of my work.
2. I will use my power, authority, and position to build up the community of believers and seek first the kingdom of God.
3. I will work within my trained competence, especially in counseling situations, and I will refer individuals to other professionals as appropriate.
4. I will preach, teach, admonish, or discipline in ways that are biblical and Christlike, promoting the shalom and flourishing of those to whom I am ministering (2 Tim. 3:16).
5. I will refrain in my pastoral care and counseling from using references to Scripture or God to manipulate, coerce, or threaten another person.
6. I will disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest.

Confidentiality

1. I will maintain and uphold confidentiality appropriately, which means I will hold in confidence whatever information is not mine to share.
2. I will not use information shared with me in confidence in order to elevate my position or to depreciate that of others.

Finances

1. I will ensure that funds for which I am responsible or which are under my control are used for their intended ministry purposes.
2. In all financial matters, including the acceptance of gifts, I will act with scrupulous honesty, transparency, and appropriate accountability.
3. I will appropriately use and encourage accepted accounting practices and regular reviews and/or audits of ministry funds.

In the event that I misuse my power, either intentionally or unintentionally, in my dealings with others, in word or deed—if I fail “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly” (Mic. 6:8) as outlined in the Scriptures and our confessions—I will acknowledge the harm that has been caused and the trust that has been broken, and I will actively seek restoration with justice, compassion, truth, and grace. I will humbly submit to the insight and accountability of the body that implements this Code of Conduct to ensure that I use any power entrusted to me fully in service to Christ.

In the beautiful hope of Christ’s transforming work, in all I do, I will seek to use my position, power, and authority prudently and humbly to support and encourage all the members of his body in my care.

First and Last Name (Printed)

Date Signed

Signature



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REFERENCES CHECKLIST FOR _____

Name of reference:

Phone #:

Date:

Introduce yourself: My name is (reference checker). I am phoning to obtain a reference for (volunteer's name), who has expressed an interest in the volunteer position of _____ at Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church. He/she has given us your name as someone who would be familiar with his/her qualifications for this position.

1. What is your relationship to this person (work, social, volunteer, etc.)?
2. How long have you known him/her?
3. What knowledge do you have of this person's commitment to Jesus Christ?
4. Have you ever worked with this person in ministry? Please specify in what areas.
5. What characteristics would enable this person to fulfill this position?
6. Do you have any concerns relating to this person being involved in this ministry?
7. Additional comments regarding this person for ministry:
8. Do you affirm this person for ministry?

Reference checker's name:

Signature:

Date:





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INTRODUCTION FOR POLICE CHECK REQUEST

Dear _____

Date: _____

Our Safe Church Policy directs us to require a police background check for all volunteers and paid staff.

Attached is a letter of request for a police check for you. You will take a picture of this for your online application for your Police Record Checks as they are not done in person, but only online. Go to **opp.ca/recordchecks**

This is FREE for all volunteers!

If you require help with your online application, please reach out to Nikki Kuipers, Office Administrator, during office hours and she will be happy to assist you through this process.

You will need your Driver's License and should have your wallet readily available for the personal questions for identity verification. These questions are multiple choice about past addresses and banking information. They will not ask you to input credit card or Social Insurance Numbers. Once completed, the record check will be emailed to you within a couple weeks.

When you receive the PDF copy of your Vulnerable Sector Screen, please email it or print it off and place it in the Safe Church mail slot or the mail slot for Lammy DeRuiter.

Our Safe Church Team consists of Nikki Kuipers, _____ (Council Member) and Lammy DeRuiter.

We thank you for your service in our church and wish you blessings in your ministry.

Sincerely,

Lammy DeRuiter, Safe Church Coordinator
lamwal@hotmail.com
519-303-0664





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POLICE CHECK REQUEST

Date _____

To whom it may concern:

Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church has in place a Safe Church Policy.

This policy requires that all those in leadership positions over children (including Sunday School and Youth Programs), seniors, and disabled persons (both volunteers and paid staff, at Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church have a police check submitted so they are able to serve in various church ministries.

_____ is a volunteer/staff with Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church. He or she is requesting a police check including for the most comprehensive screening available, i.e., Vulnerable sector, Criminal record check, Pardoned Sexual Offenders check, or similar.

Sincerely yours,

Lammy DeRuiter, Safe Church Coordinator
lamwal@hotmail.com
519-303-0664

~SAMPLE COPY ONLY~





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REMINDER RE: SCREENING FORMS

Dear _____, Date: _____

Recently you were notified of your obligation to submit a police check and/or complete the Covenant of Care/Code of Conduct. As of today, the Safe Church Team has not received the requested form(s). It is absolutely necessary for you to do so as soon as possible. This procedure not only ensures a safe environment for everyone but also serves to protect you from unfounded allegations. Together we can provide a safe and secure atmosphere for those who are vulnerable as well as practice due diligence.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter.

The Safe Church Team

- Forms Requested:
- Service Profile
 - Police check
 - Covenant of Care (Minors)
 - Code of Conduct (Adults)



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REMINDER RE: SCREENING FORMS

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Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter.

The Safe Church Team

- Forms Requested:
- Service Profile
 - Police check
 - Covenant of Care (Minors)
 - Code of Conduct (Adults)



INCIDENT REPORT pt1

This form should be used to report and file a record of occurrences of injuries, accidents, first aid treatment, complaints or concerns about any situation in which a person feels physically, emotionally or sexually threatened or injured while in the programs and activities of Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church.

Date of incident:

Date of report:

Program and location of incident:

Witnesses:

Phone:

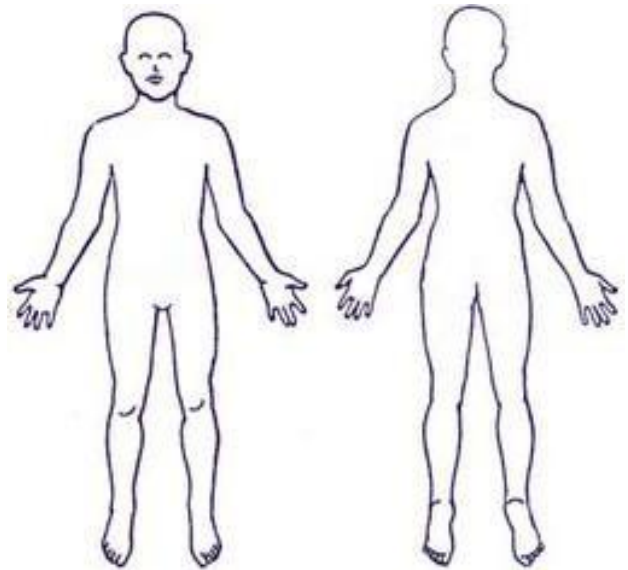
Person(s) involved:

Age:

Phone:

Description of Incident/Injury: See also the back of this page, where you can add additional information.

Please mark area affected, if applicable:



Action/treatment taken (Provide names, date, time, by whom, reaction):

Parent/guardian informed: Yes / No

Program head informed: Yes / No

First Aid administered (be specific):



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INCIDENT REPORT pt2

Reporting person:

Signature:

Ministry leader:

Signature:

Description of follow-up and additional comments:

Follow-up done by:

Signature:

Date:

The completed form is to be given to the Safe Church Team who will review the incident. A copy will be given to the Program leader for review and filing. The original report will be filed by the Safe Church Team.

Form received by Safe Church Team on:

by:

Any follow-up taken:

Signature:





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PROGRAM ACTIVITY FORM pt1

20__-20__ Church Education Year

FAMILY NAME:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Child's name: | Program(s): |
| Birthdate: | Health Card #: |
| Allergies or concerns: | |
| 2. Child's name: | Program(s): |
| Birthdate: | Health Card #: |
| Allergies or concerns: | |
| 3. Child's name: | Program(s): |
| Birthdate: | Health Card #: |
| Allergies or concerns: | |

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Parent/guardian's name:

Full address:

Email:

Phone number:

Cell number:

Emergency Contact:

Phone number:

(More on next page) -----





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PROGRAM ACTIVITY FORM pt2

Please read the following, check each box and sign the bottom of this form to register your child(ren) for the current church education year.

I/we (the parents/guardian of the above children) give permission for our child(ren) to attend the various programs at Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church in Ingersoll, for the current education year.

I/we understand that the information on this form will be copied and given to each program leader that my child(ren) will participate in this current church education year.

I/we give permission for my child(ren) to be photographed or video-taped for the use of promotional publications, documentation of special events and that these may be shared with the congregation and community (I.e. power points, brochures, etc.)

I/we give permission for the leaders in the programs to seek emergency medical treatment if needed, with the understanding that I/we will be contacted as soon as possible.

Parent/guardian name (please print):

Parent/guardian's signature:

Date:





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SUNDAY SCHOOL & COFFEE BREAK NURSERY REGISTRATION

Program name:

Child's name:

Age:

Parent's/guardian's name:

Allergies:

Additional information:

Emergency contact:

Liability Waiver: We do our best to provide a safe environment for your child, however sometimes accidents happen and medical attention may be necessary. By signing this waiver, you release Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church, and all staff and volunteers from any liability due to any injury that your child may sustain during this program. You also give permission for Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church to seek medical attention for the above child, if necessary.

Parent's/guardian's Signature:

Date:

Photo Release: Sometimes pictures are taken for use in the church, such as power point presentation and our church website. By signing this portion, you give permission for pictures to be taken of your child for the purposes stated above:

Parent's/guardian's Signature:

Date:

Nursery Activity: Sometimes, during a program, a nursery attendant may take a child out of the nursery. This may be to go find a parent, for some fresh air, to play outside, or to play/walk around the church. At no time will the nursery attendant take your child off of church property. Is your child allowed to leave the nursery room with an attendant for the above-mentioned activities?

YES

NO

Parent's/guardian's Signature:

Date:





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TRANSPORTATION CONSENT FORM

I, (name) _____ give permission for (minor) _____ to be transported by volunteers of Ingersoll Christian Reformed Church. I understand that the driver will have a valid driver's license and insurance as well as adequate seatbelts.

Parent's/guardian's Signature:

Date:

Phone number:

Cell:

PARENTAL CONSENT AND MEDICAL FORM:

I, _____ give permission for _____ to attend activities (i.e. field trip, work project, convention, special outings as well as activities on church property) sponsored by _____ SUNDAY SCHOOL

_____ GEMS

_____ CADETS

_____ YOUTH

_____ FRIENDSHIP

_____ OTHER

I give permission for leaders of the organization to secure needed emergency medical treatment of the minor, named above, in case of accident or injury during outings.

Parent/guardian:

Date:

Phone number|:

Cell:

Parent's/guardian's Signature:





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AUTOMOBILE SAFETY CERTIFICATION FOR DRIVERS

Thank you for your willingness to participate in church program outings, or in transporting participants to or from the church for our programs. To ensure safety for all, please answer the following questions honestly.

Do you have a current valid driver's license? _____

Name of program coordinator who received a photocopy of your license: _____

Is your vehicle insured? _____

Have you received any tickets for driving violations in the past 2 years?

If yes, please give reasons for tickets: _____

_____.

Do you have any medical conditions that would interfere with your ability to drive safely?

If yes, please elaborate: _____

_____.

Is your vehicle in safe operating condition? _____

Seat belts are to be used for all passengers.

All rules of the road apply to you and should be followed.

No alcohol, smoking or vaping is allowed in the vehicle.

Do you agree to drive without distractions of cell phone use, or other devices? _____

All Safe Church Policy applies to the driver and passengers.

NAME: (print) _____

Date: _____

Signature:

