

The Nett Church

**675 Pleasant Hill Rd
Lilburn, GA 30047**

**444 Bethesda Church Road
Lawrenceville, GA 30044**

Safe Sanctuary Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

THE NETT CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT

We enable Nations to Experience Transformation in Jesus Together by drawing the unchurched and dechurched into a beloved community that reflects the diversity of our school systems. We believe that by impacting the lives of individuals they will influence the cities where they live.

In Luke when the disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus, he was quick to respond, *“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”*

Jesus taught that children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith. In this day and time, the church may be the only place where some children find the unconditional love they so desperately need to grow and thrive.

As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children very seriously. Therefore, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. Provided is policy for the prevention of child abuse within our Nett Church congregation.

The Nett Church’s purpose for establishing this policy is to reduce the risk of abuse by following practical procedures of prevention. Our procedures demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth; and to protect both our paid and volunteer staff.

THE PURPOSE OF OUR CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- To provide a safe and secure environment for all children and youth at THE NETT CHURCH
- To protect children, youth and vulnerable adults from any possibility of abuse, inasmuch as humanly possible
- To reduce the probability of false accusations against volunteers, staff and clergy.
- To educate and train our staff and volunteers to identify and guard against child abuse.
- To reduce the legal risk and liability of the church.

Scope of Policy

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all persons including all paid and unpaid adults, whether lay or clergy, who have any direct or indirect contact with children and youth who participate in any activities or events sponsored by THE NETT CHURCH.

THE NETT CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY DEFINITIONS

ADULT - A person eighteen (18) years of age or older. **CHILD** - Any person under the age of eighteen (18). For the purpose of this policy any person under the age of eighteen (18) shall be referred to as a child.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES - Any activity or program in which children are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers to include the Bethesda Preschool.

HELPER – Person who provides occasional assistance and is not counted in the two (2) adult rule including youth ages twelve (12) – eighteen (18).

PERSON(S) REQUIRED TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE - All who are involved in working with youth, children and vulnerable adults. We are mandated by GA law.

PERSON INVOLVED IN A CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY – Individual participating and responsible for the conduct of scheduled activity. In the case of non-church programs operating on church property, the duties of the “staff person in charge of a children’s activity” shall be carried out by the non-local church lead staff or volunteer.

VULNERABLE ADULTS - Adults whose mental or physical condition makes them susceptible to abuse

THE NETT CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY SCREENING PROCEDURE

- All staff and volunteers who have regular and direct contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults shall be required to complete a Volunteer Application for Children and Youth Workers along with a waiver of confidentiality allowing The Nett Church to submit the necessary background information clearance (with Trak1). These will be renewed every three years. Volunteers must have a minimum of six (6) months active relationship with The Nett Church before being permitted a lead volunteer role in children's and youth activities. In the event of new staff hires, references deemed adequate by SPRC will replace the 6 month required waiting period.

Persons having a criminal history of any of the following types of offenses shall not

be allowed to serve in any ministry with children and youth:

- Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglectful
- Violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc.
- Persons having a criminal history of DUI or DWI conviction with the five years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to act as driver.
- Persons having a criminal history of a drug related conviction with the five years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to participate in the event.

2. All forms and reference reports shall be placed in the applicant's confidential personnel file in the church office. All reference checks shall be included in the personnel file.

3. Non-church programs shall maintain their own personnel files. The Nett Church reserves the right to obtain an explanation of the non-local church's record keeping process and, upon written request by the Pastor, to be given copies of documents applicable in outside programs connected with The Nett Church.

4. The Directors of Children's and Youth Ministries are responsible for reviewing this policy with each applicant prior to service.

- The Covenant is a statement in which the participants and leaders/chaperones agree to take part in the ministry; give their best efforts to the ministry; respect the other participants and leaders; treat others as well as they would wish to be treated.
- Files kept regarding volunteers will be accorded the same status as personnel files of staff persons with any applicable exceptions required by the Discipline regarding clergy volunteers.

5. If children or youth will be transported in a volunteer's personal auto or a church owned vehicle, the driver's license number and updated insurance information must be on file. Two unrelated adults must be in the vehicle while transporting children and or youth.

Minimum driving age is 25 years.

To reduce the possibility of abuse to children, youth or vulnerable adults, and to protect staff and volunteers from unwarranted accusations, The Nett Church adopts this "SUPERVISION PROCEDURE." The following are **MINIMUM** standards and each department's activity may adopt more stringent requirements as necessary.

1. All staff and volunteers working with children, youth or vulnerable adults in church related or Bethesda Preschool activities shall be trained on an annual basis. Training shall include, but not be limited to, review of the Safe Sanctuary Policy, how to recognize the signs of abuse, and Cyber Safety.
2. Two **UNRELATED** Adult rule will be followed. There will be two (2) unrelated adults for each The Nett Church and Bethesda Preschool activity involving children, youth or vulnerable adults. If it is not possible to have two unrelated adults, there will be a "Roamer" who moves amid the activities during the program with unscheduled appearances on a random basis.
3. No child, youth or vulnerable adult will be left unsupervised while attending an activity at The Nett Church. A buddy system will be used when a child needs to leave the room for the bathroom. Buddies are the child needing to leave the room and another classmate. The adult will wait outside the bathroom until the children exit and are ready to return to the activity.
4. Each room or space where children, youth or vulnerable adults are being cared for shall have a window in the door or the door shall be left open. All activities shall occur in open view. Should the activity be an outdoor program, or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this policy, the staff person in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting suits the activity, the equipment is in safe operation, and the children, youth or vulnerable adults are properly supervised.
5. All activities in which children are outside the direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require signed, written permission forms. Parents/Guardians shall supply pertinent health information as well.
6. No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is **AT LEAST 18** years of age or older, and is **five (5) years older** than the oldest child being supervised.
7. Accurate Participation Records shall be maintained for all children's activities. At a minimum, these records should list the date and hours of the activity, its location, the names of the children participating.
8. All staff and volunteers will maintain an appropriate use of any social networking websites that might be used including Twitter, Facebook, etc. **Refer to Addendum A.**

Discipline

Constructive discipline - Children and youth should be made aware that appropriate

behavior is expected at all events. Discipline should be constructive and reflect Christian values. Physical punishment, name-calling and belittling comments are never permitted. Adult event or activity leaders should administer discipline.

- Adult leaders will follow discipline procedures that are age-appropriate, including administering discipline with love and using age appropriate reinforcement to help the child/youth develop self-control and assume responsibility for his or her actions.
- Adult leaders are responsible for monitoring the behavior of children and youth members and interceding when necessary. Parents of participants who misbehave will be informed and asked for assistance in dealing with the discipline problem. When the misbehavior constitutes a threat to the safety of the child or to the safety of others, the child will be removed from the activity and where feasible, the parents will be asked to pick him/her up. Safe Sanctuary guidelines and procedures must be followed when a child is removed from an activity.
- The adult leaders will review repetitive or serious incidents of misbehavior in consultation with the parents of the child to determine a course of corrective action including possible revocation of the child's/youth's participation in Children's or Youth's activities.

Permission Slips - Prior to any activity away from the church, a Parental Permission, Release and Consent to Medical Treatment Form must be signed by the child's or youth's parent or legal guardian. Unless the form is signed and in the possession of the church, the child or youth will not be allowed to participate in the away activity.

Emergency Medicine - Children/Youth will receive emergency medical treatment in the event it is necessary. The adult leadership should inform the parents, Trustees and the senior pastor about all incidents that result in a physical injury or involve allegations of sexual misconduct by a youth with another youth.

Spiritual Boundaries for Safe Sanctuary

As we seek to lead young people in the development of their faith story, it is essential that we guide them and do not manipulate their emotions. This is especially true at longer youth/ children's events. The attendees may be exhausted by longer and more active days than they are accustomed to and thereby more susceptible to emotional manipulation. It is therefore necessary that, as we present the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the opportunity to follow Jesus in a life-long journey, we present the invitation with "no- strings-attached." We must allow each person involved to make their own decisions without stigma, coercion, or pressure in any form. As we do this faithfully, we will see more fruitful commitments in the lives of all our participants.

Listen intently to our children, youth and vulnerable adults and report any potential incident of abuse in the outlined manner.

1. Notify the parent or guardian of the alleged victim and take any necessary steps to assure the child, youth or vulnerable adult's safety. The child, youth or vulnerable adult's safety is the first concern. Information such as the child, youth or vulnerable adult's name, address, and family information should be gathered.
2. Call the Children and or Youth Directors and file a report.
3. Upon receiving such information, the teacher or Volunteer will call local law enforcement if necessary.
4. The Lead Pastor is to be informed immediately.
5. If the alleged abuse occurred on The Nett Church property (or on an offsite trip or activity) by a church volunteer or staff, removal of the volunteer or staff from contact with children shall be immediate until the incident has been resolved. Care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is being conducted. They shall not be banned from other church ministries.
7. The Crisis Management Plan stating reporting procedures shall be posted in every classroom, Fellowship Hall, Chapel, Sanctuary, Youth Pavilion. This is what I was trying to find yesterday!
8. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved with the incident.

RESPONSE PLAN - A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child, youth and vulnerable adult abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously.

- In all cases of reported or observed abuse in a children's, youth or vulnerable adult's activity, all adults involved in that activity shall be required to cooperate with the Pastor of The Nett Church, The Nett Church Children's or Youth Minister, and the designated United Methodist Conference Representative.
- The pastor will prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation. Unnecessary details, blame, or interference with the victim's privacy or violation of privacy will be avoided. This statement will be cleared with the Conference Communicator, the North Georgia District Superintendent, and Director of Connectional Ministries.
- The Lead Pastor shall be the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All statements are to be reviewed with the Conference Communicator, North Georgia District Superintendent, and Director of Connectional Ministries before they are shared with the media.

- If the allegation is against a staff person or pastor, the Chair of Staff Parish Relations Committee will contact the District Superintendent immediately.
- When the investigation is completed a letter will be sent to the congregation explaining the results of the investigation and steps taken after being cleared by the Conference Communicator, North Georgia District Superintendent, and Director of Connection Ministries.
- Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved with the incident as indicated.

AMENDMENT "A" - CYBER SAFETY

The internet and portable devices allow people to stay in contact with each other more easily than at any other time in the history of civilization. Some incredible ministry can take place using modern technology, but as with all forms of ministry there are some inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications. There is no such thing as privacy in cyberspace. Consider anything and everything on the internet as public information.

1. Written parental permission for children and vulnerable adults will be required for:

- The posting of photos on any websites hosted/owned by The Nett Church, and its Children's Ministries, Youth Ministries, Bethesda Preschool.
- Emailing, Instant Messaging, Calling, Texting, or the sending of data to a child, or vulnerable adult by computer, PDA, or cell phone.
- The sharing of any full name or contact information.

2. Easily identifiable information will not be posted online.

3. All communications will be conducted in a professional manner and communications with children and/or vulnerable adults shall be limited. All communications with children and vulnerable adults will be saved for the purpose of an electronic paper trail.

4. If made uneasy about any topic addressed in an email or an email in general, a blind carbon copy will be sent to the parent/guardian or another trusted adult. Privacy will be honored, but not secrecy.

5. If abuse is divulged electronically standard reporting procedures as outlined by this policy shall be followed.

6. The following procedures shall be followed for the safety of sharing photos electronically.

- Refrain from using names and never post a last name when posting photos or identifiable information.
- Photos will be checked for vulnerable/compromising situations and to make sure the photos uphold the mission/ministry. Nametags shall not be distinguishable.

The following safety measures are in place for social networking sites:

- Privacy limits are required to be set to limit who can see the profile. Restrict who can be a friend. Passwords to accounts will not be divulged.
- Use of higher level security features will be used when offered by the network.
- Do not post anything on the site you would not want on your resumes or printed in the church newsletter or bulletin. Remove and/or do not post any inappropriate comments, photos, etc. (The Nett Church children and youth will be encouraged to follow these same guidelines.)

AMENDMENT "B" – PHOTO and VIDEO PERMISSION

Photo Permission

THE NETT CHURCH

**675 Pleasant Hill Rd
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Throughout the year, The Nett Church students are photographed and video recorded as they participate in activities at the Church. The photos and videos are used in church-related promotional and advertising materials disseminated to the public through newspapers, magazines, admission materials, our website, social media, and other channels deemed appropriate and safe by The Nett Church. Unless otherwise indicated below, I give The Nett Church permission to use, edit, reproduce, and publish photographs, video, and audio of my child. This authorization permits the use of photographs, video, and audio, in any medium or form of distribution, including, but not limited to, The Nett Church website, brochures, media outlets, promotional materials, or in any other manner as determined by the sole discretion of The Nett Church. This consent will remain in effect until changed in

writing by using this opt out form. Please note: Only complete and return the form below if you wish to OPT OUT of this release.

I wish to withdraw the consent described in the Photo and Video Release above. Student Name: _____

Grade: _____

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

AMENDMENT "C" – CYBER COMMUNICATION PERMISSION

Cyber Communication Permission

FOR CHILDREN and YOUTH

THE NETT CHURCH

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My child _____ has my permission to communicate with The Nett Church Director of Children/Youth Ministry/Director of Children's Choirs (circle one or both) via: Check all that apply:

Phone Call ____, Cell Phone Call __, Cell Phone Text ____, Facebook ____, Email ____, Instant Messaging ____, GroupMe ____, Remind ____, The Sending of Data by Computer or PDA _____. A copy of all emails will also be sent to me at _____.

Signed: _____ (parent)

Date: _____

The Nett Church
Youth, Children and Vulnerable Adult Incident Report

Child's Name _____

Date of Incident _____ Time of Incident _____

Place of Incident _____

Describe Incident _____

Describe Nature of Incident _____

Was Parent Contacted? _____ Was Director or Pastor Contacted? _____

Other Persons Contacted? _____

Additional Information _____

Witness #1 _____

Contact Information _____

Witness #2 _____

Contact Information _____

AUTHORIZATION TO PICK UP A CHILD FROM THE NETT CHURCH

Name of Child(ren) or Youth: _____ I hereby inform The Nett Church that the people listed below are authorized to pick up the above named child(ren) or youth at anytime. Accordingly, The Nett Church is hereby given permission to release my child(ren) or youth into the care of the following people whenever they come to The Nett Church. AUTHORIZED PICK-UP PERSON or PERSONS: Name: Relationship to Child: Phone Number:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

I understand that:

- Parents/guardians must inform The Nett Church (call, leave a note at drop off) of the name of the person who is picking up their child(ren) or youth on any day when they themselves are not.

- The “Authorized Pick-Up Person” must be at least 18 years old and may be asked to provide a photo ID to the staff.
- This authorization shall remain in force until edited or rescinded in writing by the signers of this authorization.

Authorized by: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature Date _____