

# *Gilford Community Church*

## *Family Handbook*



*Gilford Community Church*  
*19 Potter Hill*  
*Gilford, NH 03249-6803*

*Serving our Community*  *in the New Millennium*

*Gathered in 1798*

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## **Part 1: Introduction**

### **Gilford Community Church Mission Statement**

- Gilford Community Church is an inclusive, open community that accepts believers and doubters, seekers and skeptics, young and old. If you have not been to a church recently - or even if you have -- we would like to be your companions on a journey of faith that here often includes laughter, live music, and joy. While we celebrate our differences at Gilford Community Church, what we share in common is a commitment to the spiritual journey, supporting each other, and engaging in the public life of Gilford, the Lakes Region and beyond. We believe we (and you) can make a difference in the world.

### **Gilford Community Church Sunday School Mission Statement**

- The Mission of the GCC Sunday School is to provide a strong foundation in Christian education for the young people of the GCC, by exposing students to the beauty of God's creation, developing in them a belief of God's presence in their lives and leading them to make a commitment to follow Christ's example.

### **Sunday School Introduction**

- The GCC offers Sunday School classes to children in preschool through 8th grade. Sunday School groups will provide children with a place to connect and build relationships with other individuals their age. The program runs on Sunday mornings, 10am-11am, during Sunday service. Following the "Children's Sermon", children will head to their designated classes. Children will meet their parents at our "Coffee Hour", following service, in Fellowship Hall.

## **Part II: Goal and Definition**

### **Goal & Definition of Children**

- It shall be the goal of Gilford Community Church to provide a safe environment for the physical and emotional well-being of all children participating in activities. The Gilford Community Church's objective is to inform all employees and volunteers enforce policies to ensure that all children are safe and well protected while attending scheduled activities.
- Future revisions and adjustments to this policy may be made with the authorization of both the Pastor, Youth Director and the HR Committee.
- The term "child" or "children" shall include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

## **Part III: Safety Responsibilities & Rules**

### **Define Safety of Children**

- It is the responsibility of all persons having contact with the children participating in programs to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. *If in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists, such persons shall immediately take appropriate precautions under the circumstance to protect ALL children.*

### **Sunday School Registration and Acknowledgement of Family Handbook**

- Each family participating the the Gilford Community Church will have a registration form for each child participating in the Sunday School/Event Programs along with their acknowledging the Gilford Community Church Family Handbook. **(Appendix A)**

### **Identification System**

- To reduce the possibility of kidnapping, the Gilford Community Church will have in place an identification system for drop-off and pick-up procedures. The person in charge shall maintain the system, to identify persons authorized to pick-up and take responsibility for the child.

### **Observation of Children**

- Activities for children should be scheduled in areas visible from adjoining areas. Such visibility will be maintained by leaving curtains and blinds open and, wherever possible, leaving the door to a room open.
- Two adults or an adult and a youth worker at least five years older than those they are supervising should be present at all times during events/activities involving children.

### **Publication**

- Parents/Guardian have the right to opt in/out to have child pictures used for promotional purposes, including but not restricted to: print and digital publications, news releases, online, and other communications related to the mission of Gilford Community Church. **(Appendix B)**

## **Part V: Definitions, Reporting and Responding to Allege Child Abuse/ Sexual Harrassment/Bullying/Neglect/Physical Discipline or Abuse**

### **Sexual Abuse**

- Means the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or having a child assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children; or providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.

### **Sexual Harassment (Child/ren Against Child/ren or Adult Against Child/ren)**

- While it is not possible to identify every act that constitutes or may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of sexual harassment:
  - Unwelcome requests for sexual favors.
  - Lewd or derogatory comments or jokes.
  - Comments regarding sexual behavior.
  - Sexual innuendo and other vocal activity such as catcalls or whistles.
  - Obscene letters, notes, texts, emails, social media posts, invitations, photographs, cartoons, articles, or other written or pictorial materials of a sexual nature.
  - Repeated requests for dates when it is known, or should have been known, that interest is unwelcome. Retaliating against another for refusing a sexual advance or reporting an incident of possible sexual harassment to the GCC
  - Offering or providing favors or employment benefits such as promotions, favorable evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, in exchange for sexual favors.
  - Any unwanted physical touching or assaults.

### **Bullying (Child/ren Against Child/ren or Adult Against Child/ren)**

- Commonly defined as intentional, repeated hurtful acts, words, or other behavior, such as name-calling, threatening, and/or shunning committed by one or more children against another. These negative acts are not intentionally provoked by the victims and for such acts to be defined as bullying an imbalance in real or perceived power must exist between the bully and the victim.
- Bullying can include:
  - Physical bullying, such as punching, poking, strangling, hair pulling, beating, biting, and excessive tickling.
  - Verbal bullying, such as hurtful name-calling, teasing, and gossiping.
  - Emotional bullying, such as rejecting, terrorizing, extorting, defaming, humiliating, blackmailing, isolating, or ostracizing others; rating/ranking of personal characteristics such as race, disability, ethnicity, or perceived sexual orientation; manipulating friendships; and peer pressure.

- Sexual bullying, such as many of the actions listed above as well as exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual propositioning, sexual harassment, and abuse involving actual physical contact and sexual assault.
- Cyber-bullying. Any of the bullying behavior described above carried out over electronic means, including over social media. Impersonation of others is a form of cyber-bullying prohibited by the GCC.

### **Physical Discipline/ Abuse**

- Means using physical force, no matter how light, to cause deliberate pain or discomfort in response to an unwanted behavior. The Gilford Community Church Prohibits inflicting physical discipline/abuse in any manner upon a child.
  - Physical force to the body includes, but is not limited to, spanking, hitting, shaking, biting, pinching, pushing, pulling, or slapping.)
  - Use any strategy that hurts, shames, or belittles a child.
  - Use any strategy that threatens, intimidates, or forces a child.
  - Use food as a form of reward or punishment.
  - Embarrass any child in front of others.
  - Compare children.
  - Place children in a locked and/or dark room.
  - Leave any child alone, unattended or without supervision.
  - Allow discipline of a child by other children.
  - Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle a child's parents, families, or ethnic groups.
  - Initiating uncomfortable forms of affections with children (example, having children sit on the lap of an adult, giving hugs, or other forms of affection)

### **Reporting Policy**

- It is the policy of the Gilford Community Church to report any incident of child/ren against child/ren or adult against children abuse/neglect or sexual harassment/abuse toward any child
- Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous.
- Notify your supervisor immediately. Commence the investigation right away. The staff member in charge should suspend the accused person from the performance of duties involving children until the official investigation has been completed.
- Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
- The Pastor will inform the victim and victim's family of the steps that are being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigation. If child abuse is confirmed, ask the victim and the victim's family what action they would like to take in the matter and fully cooperate to address their requests within the bounds of a legal and prudent response. (Legal counsel should assist in this determination.)
- In an instance where child abuse is confirmed, the Gilford Community Church will immediately dismiss the worker from their position. Termination is considered

appropriate in the circumstances.

- In instances where evidence is inconclusive, the Gilford Community Church should take action with the advice of legal counsel in consultation with law enforcement officials depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim and the victim's family's requests.
- The Pastor, in consultation with legal counsel, will determine the amount of information he believes is appropriate to relate to the Gilford Community Church membership.

### **Reporting Obligation**

- By New Hampshire state law, anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being physically abused, sexually abused or neglected is required to report this information to appropriate authorities.

### **Reports Required**

- Any worker of the Gilford Community Church who has cause to believe that a child's physical or emotional health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report that belief according to the following procedure:
  - The worker shall report such beliefs to the Pastor, a member of the staff and/or leadership.
  - The Pastor or staff member will immediately report to the local law enforcement agency.
  - The Pastor will notify the parents of the child, unless the parent is the person responsible for the suspected abuse or neglect.
  - The Pastor, with the chairperson of the HR Committee, will notify the appropriate legal counsel.
  - The Pastor will notify the Gilford Community Church's insurance agent that an abuse report has been filed with the appropriate local or state agency.

### **Incident Report**

- The person making a report should identify:
  - the name and address of the child.
  - the name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody or welfare of the child .
  - any pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.

### **Confidentiality**

- All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by an employee/volunteer shall be cause for immediate dismissal. The pastor, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation, may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other children from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified; however, in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

### **Investigation of Alleged Abuse or Neglect**

- No person shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interrogation of the child, the accused person or a witness. It is acceptable to obtain a reasonable amount of information to have cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected. Interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the organization in an official capacity. All employees and volunteers shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.

### **Suspension of Duties**

- A person accused of child abuse or neglect will be suspended from all duties involving children. This includes all teaching/volunteering duties. The HR Committee is not authorized to conduct an investigation of the incident but is allowed to monitor any such investigation and receive confidential information concerning the incident as may be necessary to determine issues concerning continuation of employment and compensation. The person accused should be suspended on 'paid leave' until the investigation is completed. This removal from duty should occur in such a way that an innocent person is not immediately deemed guilty. There are false claims made each year. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the employee can be returned to their prior position.

### **Preservation of Records**

- Copies of all documents relating to an event of abuse or neglect, including a list of all persons known to be present or in the vicinity shall be transferred to the Pastor. They will review them to determine if the documents are complete in accordance with the Gilford Community Church's policy. If any documents are missing, they shall make a written notation and transfer the documents to the officials who shall retain them until advised that all criminal and civil investigations and actions have been completed.

### **Care and Concern**

- The Pastor and Youth Director shall encourage and assist the child and the parents in securing appropriate counseling, care and support. In the event the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the Gilford Community Church, the Pastor shall encourage and assist the individual in securing appropriate religious care and support, including third-party counseling, being mindful of the potential for a conflict of interest.

### **Liaison With the Community**

- The Pastor will serve as the Gilford Community Church sole access to the media. The Gilford Community Church should emphasize to the public its position on child abuse, its concern for the victim and the extensive steps being taken to address the safety of all children.

**Appendix A:**

# Sunday School Registration Form



[www.gilforcommunitychurch.org](http://www.gilforcommunitychurch.org)

**Child Name (First and Last):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Child Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Child Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Name (First and Last):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact Name (first and Last):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Relationship to Child:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other adults that are able to pick your child up for Sunday School or Monthly Events**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Please list any allergies or medical conditions that we should know about:**

## Acknowledgment of Gilford Community Church Family Handbook

**Name (please print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Gilford Community Church

## Photo Consent Form



I hereby give permission for \_\_\_\_\_,  
Child's Name

to have his/her picture used for promotional purposes, including but not restricted to: print and digital publications, news releases, online, and other communications related to the mission of Gilford Community Church.

Print: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian