



# GASHLAND

BAPTIST CHURCH



## *Child Protection Policy*

### Table of Contents

WELCOME	3
GBC STUDENT SAFETY SYSTEM	4
REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE	6
BUILDING SAFETY	7
SUPERVISION	7
STAFF MEMBER/VOLUNTEER TO STUDENT RATIO	7
COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES	8
DISCIPLINE	9
BULLYING	9
RESTROOM POLICIES	10
EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER POLICIES	10
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION	13
TRANSPORTATION	16
OUT-OF-PROGRAM CONTACT WITH STUDENTS	17
PLANNING EVENTS FOR GROUPS	17
STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT	19



# WELCOME

Welcome to Gashland Baptist Church!

At Gashland Baptist Church, henceforth GBC, we take our responsibility to care for children and youth very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which youth can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for volunteers and staff members providing services to youth and children at GBC. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children and students, protecting students, you, and the mission of GBC.

After you have carefully read these policies, **please initial by every header and sign and return the agreement form located on the last page**. If you have questions, please contact your ministry director.

Thank you for serving, loving, and protecting our students.

Sincerely,

*GBC Leadership*

# **GBC STUDENT SAFETY SYSTEM \_\_\_\_\_**

Because we desire to protect students involved in our ministries, all volunteers and staff members must complete the GBC screening process, including a background check. All volunteers must be approved by the student ministry staff in order to serve.

## ***STEP ONE: SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING***

All staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in “grooming” a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child’s trust (and the trust of the child’s parent or ‘gatekeeper’), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip you with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behaviors, GBC requires all staff members and child-serving volunteers to complete Sexual Abuse Awareness Training. This training must be completed online through MinistrySafe and must be renewed every two years.

## ***STEP TWO: SCREENING PROCESS***

Staff members and volunteers serving with children are required to complete the GBC Screening Process, which includes:

- Volunteer Application
- Face-to-Face Interview
- Reference Checks

A volunteer must attend GBC services for six months and be a member before being eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to children & youth.

## ***STEP THREE: POLICIES & PROCEDURES***

Please review these policies and sign the last page and initial by every header indicating that you have read and understood the material and agree to comply with our policy requirements.

## ***STEP FOUR: CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK***

All staff members and volunteers working with children must undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required. Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve in any area providing services to children or minors. In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude an applicant from serving minors.

### *CHILD PROTECTION*

GBC supports and maintains a **zero-tolerance** policy concerning child abuse and neglect. It is a violation of Missouri law for any volunteer or staff member to physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect any child participating in GBC programs.

**In this document child, youth, or student, refers to any minor under the age of 18, or any 18-year-olds, still in the youth ministry.**

### *ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES*

Student ministries maintain the highest standards in order to protect both the volunteers and students in our ministry. Anyone working with children or students at GBC is subject to the supervision and evaluation of the ministry staff and must follow these guidelines. Staff members and volunteers in supervisory positions must diligently enforce all policies.

GBC staff reserves the right to dismiss volunteers who fail to follow the policies and guidelines.

### *CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION*

Any person accused of committing any act considered by the church to be harmful to a student will be immediately suspended from participation in ministry to youth. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement, Child Protective agencies, or the Church.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from *future* participation in all activities and programming involving minors. If the person is an employee, such conduct may result in termination of employment.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving minors at GBC.

Staff members and volunteer leaders should discuss immediately with their supervisor any inappropriate action or breaking of this policy and will seek counsel from the church leadership and attorney, if needed.

## **REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE \_\_\_\_\_**

### *REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS*

GBC is committed to protecting the students in this ministry from any form of abuse. GBC has a Zero-Tolerance Policy that prohibits any act of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse. This zero-tolerance policy requires all GBC employees and volunteer leaders (those who work directly with students) to immediately report any occurrence (or suspected occurrence) of child abuse to a member of our staff. To this end, any report of inappropriate behavior or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services or criminal law enforcement.

Because sexual abusers ‘groom’ children for abuse, it is possible that a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child for sexual abuse. Please report ‘grooming’ behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, such that the church may take appropriate action to safeguard children in the program.

### *REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT*

**We report all suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children to the Missouri CPS Emergency Response Hotline:**

**1-800-392-3738**

*NO PERMISSION IS NEEDED from GBC before reporting to law enforcement personnel or the Child Abuse Hotline. In addition, a report may be made without involving or informing GBC personnel.*

While not required by state law, please report all suspicions of child abuse or neglect (or any inappropriate or ‘grooming’ behaviors of a colleague or coworker) to the pastors or ministry director. This request is intended to assist the church in properly protecting children involved in GBC programs.

***When in doubt, report.***

## **BUILDING SAFETY \_\_\_\_\_**

Every ministry supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the ministry program area is monitored during youth programming. No student will ever be left unattended in a ministry area during regular programming, class, or activity. All students should be easily observable during regular programming, class, or activity.

## **SUPERVISION \_\_\_\_\_**

Only screened ministry volunteers, church staff members, and students are allowed in areas where ministry to students is occurring. All other adults should be asked for identification and immediately escorted out of the area. If questions or concerns arise related to any person in the area, a ministry supervisor or security team member should be notified immediately.

### **Two trained, screened adults should supervise students at all times.**

Avoid being alone with an individual student in any room or during any ministry program. If one supervising adult must leave a group of students, another volunteer or employee must be notified so that the *Two Adult Rule* can be followed.

If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single student, move to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a student is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

If you need to talk with a student alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area, or have another leader with you. After every ministry event, ensure that every room, area and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

Avoid distractions that would impact your ability to effectively supervise students and maintain situational awareness (i.e., use of cell phones, wearing headphones).

## **SECURITY**

After every ministry programming event, ensure that every room, area, and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

### **Check-In**

- All children's events must follow check-in/out guidelines as established in the Lightbearers handbook.
- All youth should be checked-in digitally on Breeze upon their arrival and be led to join the group immediately.
- Leaders should be checked-in through Breeze for record keeping purposes.
- All supervision guidelines as above must be followed. No student should be left to wander around the building or ministry area unsupervised. All areas must be checked after the conclusion of any event.

## **STAFF MEMBER / VOLUNTEER TO STUDENT RATIO \_\_\_\_\_**

GBC is committed to providing appropriate supervision in all ministry programs. Accordingly, the following worker-to-student **minimum ratios** will be observed:

1 - 10 students	at least 2 staff members or volunteers (2 adult rule)
11 - 29 students	at least 2 staff members or volunteers
30+ students	at least 3 staff members or volunteers

GBC practices the “Two Adult Rule” which requires a reasonable number of adult leaders (minimum of two) to be maintained when supervising students.

## **COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES \_\_\_\_\_**

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their student is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their student’s program will be required to complete the GBC volunteer application and screening process.

### *Parental Contact*

Parents will be contacted if a student becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in ministry programs.



## **DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_**

No physical discipline may be used for behavior management of students, including spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors.

In the event of a fight or physical altercation, verbally redirect those involved and avoid physical intervention unless necessary for the safety of *other* students. In these instances, staff members and leaders are allowed to restrain a student with appropriate physical force, as needed. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and a Student Ministry Staff Member. Any behavior problems will be handled in the following sequence:

1. The student will be asked to correct the behavior.
2. A staff member will talk with the student to discuss the problem behavior.
3. Parents will be notified of discipline or behavior problems.
4. The student will not be allowed to attend a ministry event. (This is a final measure, but not desired.)

If a student is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions, that student will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the student's parent will be contacted to pick up the student. Any damage of property will be reported to parents, who will be responsible for repairs, including damage incurred at off-campus ministry events.

## **BULLYING \_\_\_\_\_**

Verbal, physical, or emotional bullying is not acceptable in GBC ministry programs.

At the first sign of bullying in any form, act decisively, and inform your ministry supervisor. There is no "harmless put-down" where bullying is concerned.

1. *First Offense*: Issue a warning to the student and a general reminder to the group that this kind of interaction is inappropriate. Try not to embarrass or chastise.
2. *Second Offense*: Pull the offending student(s) from the group (in a seen or supervised location) and discuss the inappropriate interaction or behavior. Set clear parameters and behavioral goals. Let the student know that the next step is communication with a pastor and the student's parents. Notify an immediate supervisor of ANY signs of bullying or verbal abuse.
  - a. Privately, but with another adult present, confirm that a student who was the target of the bullying behaviors is not in danger of continued harassment and is physically and emotionally stable.  
DO NOT SINGLE A STUDENT OUT IN FRONT OF THE GROUP: be discreet.
3. *Third Offense*: Send the student to a pastor for a phone call to his or her parents and possible removal from the trip, camp or event.

## **RESTROOM POLICIES \_\_\_\_\_**

Be aware if a student repeatedly leaves to use the restroom and stays there for unusual periods of time. Report this behavior to a supervisor. In public contexts, send students to use the restroom in groups of at least three, when possible.

## **EMPLOYEE / VOLUNTEER POLICIES \_\_\_\_\_**

### *TOBACCO USE*

Please abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of students or their parents, or during GBC ministry activities or programs, whether on campus or away. GBC is a tobacco-free facility.

### *INTOXICANTS*

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with students, or while working with or supervising minors during any GBC program or activity.

### *NUDITY*

Never be nude in the presence of students in ministry programs. In the event a situation arises that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e., changing clothes during a pool party, weekend, or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will submit a plan to the ministry supervisor concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

### *PHYSICAL APPEARANCE*

Please dress in modest, comfortable attire. Please do not wear thin-strapped shirts or low-cut shirts while you are serving. First impressions are important; please take this into consideration when you are serving.

- No revealing swimsuits
- No revealing / form-fitting clothes
- No shirts with low necklines or that show midriff
- No short dresses, skirts, or shorts

### *ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS*

Meeting the emotional or spiritual needs of students may occasionally involve interaction on an individual basis. Please observe the following guidelines when interacting with minors:

The Two Adult Rule should be diligently followed during ministry programs: do not interact *alone* with an individual student in any room or building.

In the event you find yourself alone with a single student, move to a room or area occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others.

One-to-one meetings with an individual student must occur at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed. *Example:* If a student desires additional conversation after regular programming has concluded, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present, or into a public space.

If a closed-door meeting must occur, it should occur on church property, with a second adult present. The door must remain unlocked, and any window treatments *open*.

Never hold a one-to-one meeting with a student who is the opposite gender.

Any ongoing meetings with students (such as counseling, one-to-one discipleship, etc.) should be discussed with a Student Ministry Staff Member and should comply with the Two Adult Rule OR occur in a public, easily observed location.

Staff members and adult volunteer leaders may not date (or have *any* sort of romantic interaction with) students in the student ministry.

### ***SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS***

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with students and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any student in the program.

However, it is expected that from time-to-time student ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex, and human sexuality. These lessons will convey to the students the church's views on these topics.

Students may have questions/struggles in this area and desire to confide in a trusted adult leader for guidance. Proceed with great caution, teach with sensitivity and from a biblical perspective.

- Avoid discussing anything of a sexual nature with students of the opposite gender.
- If a student's questions or comments on a sexual matter become too detailed or explicit in a group setting, the leader should use discretion and set up another time to meet with this student. For any follow up meeting: inform a student ministry staff member *first*, comply with the Two Adult Rule OR meet in a public, easily observed location.
- When in doubt as to whether a conversation could be interpreted as a "sexually oriented conversation," treat the conversation as such and follow this policy. When possible, clarify the question/topic with a Student Ministry Staff Member.

## *SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS*

Sexually oriented materials (images or videos) are prohibited on church property or in the presence of students participating in any ministry program.

## *PHYSICAL INTERACTION / APPROPRIATE DISPLAYS OF AFFECTIONS*

Appropriate touch is needed and encouraged, but it is vital that staff members and volunteer leaders do not blur or cross the lines. In light of this, the following guidelines should be observed:

- Physical contact in any form should be above reproach, for the benefit of the student, and never based upon *your* emotional needs.
- Your personal behavior must foster trust at all times.
- Pat a hand, shoulder or back in an encouraging manner.
- Side hugs: in public view and kept brief. When hugging someone of the opposite gender, hugs should be limited to side-hugs.
- Look for opportunities to give plenty of “high fives” and “fist bumps” unless this makes a student feel uncomfortable.
- Shake hands, or put an arm around the student’s shoulder, briefly.

AVOID the following interactions:

- A sexual relationship with a student is never acceptable.
- Never touch a student in sensitive areas (breasts, buttocks, genitals) even if a student has been injured in one of these areas. Never allow casual contact in these areas, under or over clothing.
- No sitting on laps.
- No hand-holding, unless part of a worship/prayer service or a group game.
- Never touch in anger or disgust.
- Never touch in a manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive.
- Avoid touching a student between the navel and the knees.
- Never carry a student piggy-back, or on your shoulders.
- Never kiss a student, or give (or receive) a massage.
- Never place hands beneath a student’s clothing to play, rub, or comfort.
- Never tickle, participate in ‘horse-play’ or wrestle with a student.

Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant student, except in cases of necessary restraint for the protection of the child or others.

A student’s preference *not* to be touched must be respected.

Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of others. It is much less likely that touch will be misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.

### *VERBAL INTERACTION*

Verbal interaction with students should be positive and uplifting. All verbal interaction should be encouraging, constructive, and mindful of our mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of students.

To this end, do not talk to students in a way that is or could be construed as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Do not swear in the presence of students.

In general, verbal interaction should occur in a location where others may observe what is happening. At no time should a student and adult disappear behind a closed door, or interact in an area which cannot be seen by others.

## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION \_\_\_\_\_**

All communication with students must be above reproach and indicative of healthy boundaries. As with any communication, the content of any electronic communication should be readily available to share with the student ministry leader or a parent.

### *TEXTING*

Texting between ministry leaders and students is permissible only as outlined below. In general, texts should occur in 'group' form, whenever possible. Though students will often reply individually, make effort to text in group form and encourage replies to the group.

Prudent judgment must be used in the timing and content of texts. **Do not text before 7am or after 10pm** unless the texting occurs as part of a programmed ministry activity.

Do not share photos and/or videos of a sexual or suggestive nature. Avoid discussion of ANY sexual topic via texts.

Do not post inappropriate or off-color content, or comment on inappropriate or off-color posts. When in doubt, treat a post as inappropriate.

**No social media communication is permitted with a student of the opposite gender.**

**Personal text communication with a student of the opposite gender must remain as limited as possible. Always try to redirect to a leader of the same gender or a group message.**

**No personal messaging should ever occur with a student below the age to enter the youth ministry, even if the same gender, all communication should be done through parents or guardians.**

**All communication with students should be available for evaluation from ministry staff, volunteers, or the student's guardians.**

### *COMMUNICATION APPLICATIONS*

**No social media communication is permitted with a student of the opposite gender.**

Avoid discussion of ANY sexual topic via digital communication.

Do not comment or reply to a student's post that is inappropriate or questionable. All interaction should be above reproach and reflect the integrity and values of GBC Student Ministry.

All communication on social media should follow the same policy as texting but with even greater caution.

**All communication with students should be available for evaluation from ministry staff, volunteers, or the student's guardians.**

Do not share posts or interact with students on any material that can be considered inappropriate, ungodly, or down putting.

***No individual social media communication may occur with a student of the opposite gender.***

The use of Snapchat (or other similar applications) with students is not permitted.  
The use of Houseparty (or other similar applications) with students is not permitted.

Applications that allow anonymous messaging are not permissible.

#### ***'HOOK-UP' APPLICATIONS***

Though the use of relationship applications are commonplace and acceptable, Ministry leaders are prohibited from participating in Meet & Date or Meet & Chat applications (those applications intended to facilitate sexual encounters).

#### ***PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA***

As a ministry leader, maintain a high moral standard in your social media presence. Inappropriate social media content may be a basis for suspension from participation in student ministry at GBC. Please be cautious about the content of the posts on your personal social media. Please ensure that photos or videos posted on social media reflect GBC ministry guidelines related to alcohol, tobacco, and modesty (dress, posture, and content).

## TRANSPORTATION \_\_\_\_\_

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for students. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when ministry workers are involved in the transportation of students:

- Parental permission in the form of a completed Church Transportation Permission Form **must be completed** before any leader or volunteer transports any student.
- Students can be transported to a single event with direct parent confirmation (Phone call from parent to ministry leader or similar) if unavailable to sign form. This should not be the norm and a form must be signed as soon as possible and before any future event.
- Students should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place must be avoided.
- Avoid transportation circumstances that leave only *one student* in transport.
- Avoid physical contact with students while in vehicles.
- Absent an emergency, **cell phones may not be used by drivers** while transporting minors (other than navigation applications for directions). In an emergency, stop the vehicle to use the cell phone, unless a stop cannot safely occur. Texting or other cell phone use is strictly prohibited while driving.
- In transportation, the TWO ADULT RULE or 'RULE OF 3' must be followed.
- Avoid transporting a single student.
- Never be alone in a vehicle with a student of the opposite sex.
- Never instruct a student to drive other students to a ministry event.
- Transport only the number of students for whom you have seatbelts.
- Seatbelts should be worn at all times while in the vehicle.
- No one should be double-buckled.
- Use extra caution when driving students.



## **OUT-OF-PROGRAM CONTACT WITH STUDENTS \_\_\_\_\_**

GBC safety standards established to protect students and ensure healthy relationships should be respected *outside* ministry programs as well. In addition to ministry safety standards, the following policies should be respected in all interactions with students occurring *outside* ministry programs.

- Never be alone with a minor in an unobserved context or location.
- Limit connections by gender. Do not initiate or maintain contact with students of the opposite gender.
- Any dating or sexual relationship of any kind with a minor is strictly prohibited.
- **Never** spend the night at a student's home or invite a student to spend the night at your home.
- Do not spend the night in an 'away' location with any student (vacation, etc.).

## **PLANNING EVENTS FOR GROUPS \_\_\_\_\_**

When planning a group event outside of regular programming, volunteer leaders should keep parents and staff members informed of details and abide by GBC policies. Some events may require a release form.

### ***OVERNIGHT EVENTS***

Some Student Ministry activities/events require overnight sleeping arrangements for students, staff members and volunteers (i.e. camp, mission trips, etc.). All programmed overnights must be approved by a ministry supervisor and receive permission from parents. No overnights are allowed on GBC property unless part of a ministry-sponsored event. No overnight between any church staff member or volunteer and an *unrelated* minor may occur in any context. If pre-existing family relationships exist wherein overnights may occur between 'family friends', these relationships must be communicated to a ministry supervisor.

For each overnight event, Student Ministry staff must create a child safety plan that will supplement this policy document to provide specific child protection steps unique to the event (activity, travel, location, other groups present).

### ***MEDICATION***

Do not administer medication of any kind to any student while serving in ministry programs, including 'over the counter' drugs. For certain trips or activities (i.e., mission trips, beach/ski retreats), GBC will bring a medical professional that will dispense appropriate medications consistent with other policies and signed parent permission forms.



# **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

## **STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT**

*This page is to be signed, detached, and delivered to Staff.*

Staff members and volunteers working with minors are required to read and understand the child protection policy. Additionally, each staff member and volunteer leader must execute an acknowledgment form that this policy has been read, understood, and will be followed. Staff members and volunteers who fail to adhere to this policy may be asked to step down from their role.

I have received and read a copy of the GBC Child Protection Policy and I understand the importance of the matters set forth herein. I understand and agree to abide by these policies during my service at GBC.

I understand that these policies may be modified or eliminated at any time by GBC.

I give permission for the church to maintain my photograph on file and to conduct a criminal-court background check on me now and at regular intervals. If allowed to work with children, I agree to be bound by the bylaws and policies of Gashland Baptist Church.

I hereby authorize all persons, schools, organizations, and law enforcement agencies to supply Gashland Baptist Church with any information concerning my character or background in connection with working with children. I further release the aforementioned parties from liability or damages which may occur as a result of their response to this request.

I authorize Gashland Baptist Church to supply my service record, in whole or part, to any prospective or future organization or agency with a legal and proper interest in them. I understand that if allowed to serve, any misrepresentation made by me in this application shall be considered sufficient cause for my dismissal from the position without advance notice. I have been apprised of and support the church's position regarding the problem of child abuse and neglect.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between GBC and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed.

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Staff member or volunteer's name (please print)

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Staff member or volunteer's signature (or parent's if under 18)

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Date





When did you start attending Gashland Baptist Church? \_\_\_\_\_  
Please list the names and locations of other churches you have attended regularly within the last 10 years.

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Please list the names of three other members of this church (GBC) who know you:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

List the name, address, and phone number of three personal references:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

Because we care for our children and desire to protect them, we ask you to please answer the following questions. These are personal and confidential questions and answers, and we commit to maintaining your privacy.

Have you ever been known by another name?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

During your lifetime, have you ever been arrested for molesting or abusing a child, accused of physical assault or sexual offense of any nature?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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Have you ever been prosecuted for child abuse or molestation?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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Are you willing to be photographed for the confidential church personnel records?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_