



The Policy for Youth Ministry at Gleráirkirkja

Youth ministry has been important in the work of Gleráirkirkja from the beginning. All involved invest their heart and soul in the work. Our shared policy is to continually improve the ministry and make a good thing even better. It is crucial for all involved to be clear on the structure of the ministry and the requirements for facilities and the workers.

We have honored certain guidelines for years and complied with a code of ethics, updated in 2009.

The grounding principle of human relations, coined in the Golden Rule, guides us: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12).

Therefore, we strive to act responsibly and faithfully in all matters, to be conscientious and cautious in a reputable manner.

Based on these maxims and ethics, we have established further guidelines to our aid in various fields of the work:

Communicating with Parents

- Parents are welcome at any time without prior notice to attend gatherings and observe or participate in the work.
- When a child attends church functions for the first time, we register names, addresses and contact information of parent/custodian. We then contact them by a letter (or e-mail or phone) where the purpose of the work and the main procedures are explained. We encourage the parent/custodian to familiarize himself or herself with the work in person, in case they did not initially attend with the child.

Practical Issues of the Ministry

- Every worker makes an effort not to work alone with small groups of children or adolescence. Under no circumstances should a worker be alone with a single child or adolescent.
- Transportation of children for ministry related occasions is only by buses or airplanes. In case a staff member of Gleráirkirkja must travel by car with one or two children, the service of a licensed taxi service or public transportation is employed. Private vehicles are never used for transportation.

- In case children or disabled youth need assistance when using restroom facilities, such help is provided only with prior consent and instructions of parent/guardian.
- In online transactions, workers take care not to talk privately with participants in the ministry. They only engage in group-chat or use a message system that simultaneously sends messages to multiple recipients.
- When playing in swimming pools or at other games characterized by physical contact, we keep age difference of participants at a minimum. The governing staff on such occasions is of both genders.
- During overnight trips, boys and girls stay in separate rooms. Workers/grown-ups do not bunk in the same rooms as the children unless for family trips and programs open to both parents and children.
- Children's programs at Gleráirkirkja are conducted in spaces with seethrough doors or exposed windows which facilitates a passer-by or co-worker to observe what takes place inside. Doors are always unlocked and access to parents is unrestricted at all times.

Log Books and Quality Control

- Gleráirkirkja maintains active internal control by professional standards. It consists of three components:
 1. Mutual visits by staff of other ministries where the checklist of the church, "Gæði í gegn" (Quality throughout), is reviewed.
 2. Monitoring by ordained ministers or deacons where the checklist "Gæði í gegn" is reviewed together with staff interviews.
 3. The youth ministry of Gleráirkirkja participates in "Job Shadowing" of the *Youth in Action Program* of *The European Commission*.
- At the end of each workday, every worker submits a written work report, including log entries for the main events of that day, recording accidents or mishaps in particular.

Courses and Continued Education

- All who work at Gleráirkirkja adhere to the guidelines of the church for youth ministry. They are particular about adhering to those standards and abiding by the code of ethics.
- Workers of Gleráirkirkja attend a four-hour first aid course every year in the fall at the onset of the winter programs. They learn to respond to accidents that might occur in our fields of operation.
- Workers of Gleráirkirkja also attend a four-hour course each fall about prevention of child abuse. They receive orientation about the major issues that need attention, "The Prevention Policy of Gleráirkirkja" and the procedures of the church in notifying incidents of abuse to the *Child Protection Committees*, complying with the *Child Protection Act* (<http://eng.felagsmalaraduneyti.is/legislation/nr/351>).

The Staff

- The staff of Gleráirkirkja consists of volunteers and paid employees. They must have reached 18 years of age, have submitted a written application where previous experience of youth work is described and provide two non-relative references. Younger assistants who have reached 15 years of age may accompany

them in ministry if they have completed or are enrolled in *Farskoli leiðtogaefna* (The Mobile School of Prospective Leaders).

- Gleráirkirkja gives orientation about the goals of the ministry and the policy of the congregation to all who are interested in joining our staff. Applicants are interviewed. On that occasion, the relations with children and youth are discussed in the context of the code of ethics and the guidelines we honor.
- Men and women who are involved in the youth ministry of Gleráirkirkja all abide by the code of ethics of *Þjóðkirkjan* (The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland). They have authorized the church to access to their criminal record which enables the church to verify that they have not violated the *Child Protection Act no. 80/2002* or been convicted of a sexual offence according to chapter 22 of *The Icelandic Penal Code*, *The Child Protection Act* or *The Youth Act*. By signature, they grant the governors of the church permission to obtain verification of a clean criminal record regarding other offences of violence according to chapters 23 and 24 of *The Icelandic Penal Code* or violations of *The Drug Act*.
- Employees and volunteers who do not comply with the rules of Gleráirkirkja receive admonition. They are summoned to an interview about how to improve the quality of their work. In case little or no reform is detected, the employee or volunteer is suspended. If the conduct is a criminal offence or is suspected to be an offence against *The Child Protection Act*, the person in question is immediately released from his/her duties.
- If the conduct of employee or volunteer is considered to be a probable breach of *The Prevention Policy for Sexual Offence* or if their words or actions were seductive or offensive to a minor's sense of sexual propriety, notifications are submitted immediately to the *Sexual Misconduct Advisory Board for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland* and the respective legal authorities. The parent/legal guardian of the minor is invited to a meeting with the church administrators.