

St. John The Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Youth Protection Policies Manual

Youth Protection Program

Overseen by SJGOC Parish Council

Dear Student Ministries Volunteer and Staff Member,

Welcome to St. John Greek Orthodox Church.

At St. John Greek Orthodox Church, we take our responsibility to care for students very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which students can grow in their relationship with the Lord.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for St. John staff members and volunteers. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for students, parishioners, volunteers, and guests, and for the mission of St. John. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,
Fr. Stavros
August 3, 2016

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OVERVIEW OF THE ST. JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH SAFETY SYSTEM

REQUIREMENTS TO VOLUNTEER

Because we love students and desire to protect them, St. John Greek Orthodox Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to **complete SAFETY STEPS ONE, TWO, THREE, AND FOUR** before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

STEP ONE: COMPLETE ONLINE YOUTH PROTECTION TRAINING VIDEO.

To equip St. John Greek Orthodox Church staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, St. John Greek Orthodox Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete MinistrySafe youth protection training (live or online through www.MinistrySafe.com). This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: REVIEW POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the **STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT OF POLICES AND PROCEDURES** on the final indicating that he or she has reviewed the material with their ministry head and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP THREE: COMPLETE SCREENING REQUIREMENTS

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the St. John Greek Orthodox Church Screening, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

1. Complete an Employment Application (employees only)
2. Complete the Safety Application (employees and volunteers)
3. Attend St. John Greek Orthodox Church for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to children, students or vulnerable populations.

STEP FOUR: UNDERGO CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

St. John Greek Orthodox Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

STUDENT SAFETY POLICY

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR ABUSE

John Greek Orthodox Church has a zero tolerance for abuse in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at St. John Greek Orthodox Church to act in the best interest of students in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations to their Ministry Supervisor, the Assistant Pastor, or the Rev. Father.

STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS MUST IMMEDIATELY:

1. Report suspicious or inappropriate behaviors
2. Report suspected “grooming” behaviors
3. Report Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

THESE POLICIES MUST BE STRICTLY ENFORCED

St. John Greek Orthodox Church staff members and volunteers are *INDIVIDUALLY RESPONSIBLE* to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies.

St. John Greek Orthodox Church is committed to providing a safe secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis and to law enforcement and Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) using its 24/7/365 abuse hotline.

Violations of these policies are grounds for dismissal, disciplinary action or reassignment from Student Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Youth Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at St. John Greek Orthodox Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from St. John Greek Orthodox Church.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at St. John Greek Orthodox Church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Florida law Statute 39.201 requires that any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse, abandonment or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer in Youth Ministries, the Pastoral Assistant or Rev. Father will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the student spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Rev. Father will be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

If appropriate, the Pastoral Assistant or the Rev. Father will inform the Florida Department of Children and Families (800-962-2873 or www.myflfamilies.com) and take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

ST. JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH YOUTH PROTECTION PROGRAM

YOUTH PROTECTION PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, St. John Greek Orthodox Church will appoint and maintain a Youth Protection Program (YPP) Committee, which will meet twice yearly.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the YPP Committee is to enable St. John Greek Orthodox Church Student Ministry to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The YPP Committee will be comprised of the following members:

- Parish Council Member
- Father Stavros Akrotirianakis
- Member at large
- Children's Ministry Representative

MEETINGS

Parish Council member will chair the meeting of the YPP Committee twice yearly to discuss risk management practices and updates. The YPP Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The YPP Committee will be charged with the following duties:

- Applying existing St. John Greek Orthodox Church policies and procedures related to student safety and risk management issues.
- Monitoring all Youth Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
- Making recommendations to the St. John Greek Orthodox Church Parish Council regarding safety issues.

STUDENT MINISTRY STAFF MONITORING PLAN

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff member and volunteer interactions with students.

- The Parish Council conducts written performance evaluations every twelve months for individuals in paid staff positions.
- The Priest conducts regular observations of a Student Ministry program at least once each quarter.
- The Priest meets with Parish Council Youth Protection Program Committee Member twice yearly and the information is given to the Parish Council
- The Pastoral Assistant conducts regular observations at least once each month for programs that occur weekly.

SIX MONTH RULE FOR VOLUNTEERS

A volunteer must be a member of SJGOC, or have regularly attended SJGOC, for six months before working with youth or children. This requirement does not apply to paid staff or volunteers involved in activities in which their own children are present. The Priest shall have the authority to waive this six-month rule upon request, where appropriate.

TWO-LEADER/OPEN-DOOR POLICY

Whenever possible, any adult who is present in a church sponsored activity for children or youth should be accompanied by another adult. SJGOC employees and volunteers should not, during a SJGOC program, be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others.

In order to avoid situations where an individual is alone in a room with children, all children's and youth activities should be supervised by at least two adult leaders. Whenever possible, these adults should be unrelated. The presence of two leaders is to protect children and youth against situations in which abuse might occur, and to protect leaders against false allegations of abuse or neglect.

Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which programs for children or youth are taking place may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers. No windows may ever be totally blocked so as to prevent visual observation into the classroom.

In the event that two leaders cannot be present in the room, such that one leader is alone in a room with one or more children or youth, a door or half-door from the room must be left open. The leader should not position himself or herself in the room such that other adults passing in the hallway cannot see him or her.

Furthermore, at any counseling session with children or youth, the door or half-door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

When a person under 18 takes confession, there should be (either) an another adult stationed in the narthex where privacy is maintained, or an adult should stand outside the east side sanctuary doors until the end of the session. In both cases the priest taking confession and the child are in full view.

Each classroom for children and youth should ideally have a door with an observation window or a half- door, such that the upper half may be kept open. If it does not, and two leaders are not present in the room, then the door must remain open at all times.

Any two students together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

ADULT TO CHILD RATIOS

Based on best practices, an adult/volunteer-to-child/youth ratio of 1:6 is recommended, gender balance. For overnight trips, the ratio is 1:4, although 1:6 is permissible.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Staff and volunteers are required to adhere to the SJGOC Youth Protection Policy guidelines in all their interactions with children and youth.
- Staff and volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and will attend training sessions on the subject.
- Staff and volunteers will respect children’s rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no.
- Staff and volunteers may not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. Uncontrolled or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to the parents and to the Pastoral Assistant.
- Physical restraint is used only in situations necessary to protect the child, other children, or staff from harm.
- Parents and the Priest will immediately be notified anytime a minor displays signs of or talks about anything related to self-harm, suicide, or imminent danger to others.
- While supervising children and youth participating in SJGOC programs, staff and volunteers should know where participants are at all times..
- Staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported according to the SJGOC Youth Protection Policy.
- Staff and volunteers are discouraged from being alone with children or youth without parental permission.
- Consuming, using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
- Being impaired by legally prescribed drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
- Possessing or using concealed weapons or firearms while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.

- Smoking or use of tobacco in the presence of children, youth, or parents while working or volunteering is prohibited. St. John Greek Orthodox Church is a tobacco-free facility.
- Staff and volunteers should not release children to any adult or family member, including older siblings, other than the child's parent/guardian unless prior verbal permission has been obtained from the parent.
- Profanity, inappropriate jokes and media, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children, youth, or parents are prohibited. However, it is expected that from time to time student's 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.
- Staff members and volunteers of St. John Greek Orthodox Church's Student Ministry are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented printed materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of students.
- Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and students should be positive and uplifting. St. John Greek Orthodox Church staff and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and be ever mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of their children. To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to students in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- Staff and volunteer adult and youth leaders shall wear appropriate dress when volunteering with children and/or youth. Staff and volunteers in St. John Greek Orthodox Church's student ministry should never be nude in the presence of students in their care.
- Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies are permitted.
- Staff and volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with program participants or church members who are younger than 18 years of age.
- Parents who leave a student in the care of St. John Greek Orthodox Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Youth Ministry programs.
- Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their student is involved at St. John Greek Orthodox Church. 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 Youth Ministry programs will be required to complete the St. John Greek Orthodox Church volunteer application and screening process.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

NURSERY CHILDREN

Call or contact parent when a child younger than five-years-old requires bathroom assistance of any kind including diaper changes.

SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

- School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. Privacy should be respected. Children may receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Approved adults should never take a child alone to the restroom.
- If an adult must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another volunteer to accompany him or her. If another volunteer is not available to accompany, the adult should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the volunteer should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.
- Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

OFF-SITE TRIPS & EVENTS

PERMISSION FORMS

Parent/Guardian Permission Forms and Medical Consent Forms must be completed prior to all trips. The two-adult rule must be followed throughout the trip with any foreseeable exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the parent or guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirements of the planned activities. Under no circumstances may one adult alone take or accompany minors on an overnight outing.

RATIOS

The required adult to child/youth ratio for chaperones for any ministry with children or youth shall be 1:6. Gender balance is preferred. For overnight trips, an adult to child/youth ratio for chaperones of 1:4 is preferred, although 1:6 is permissible. Gender balance is required.

ROOMING ARRANGEMENTS

- The 2-adult rule must be followed. The 2 adult leaders present must have previously completed St. John Greek Orthodox Church's application and screening process.
- Rooming arrangements should provide for children and youth of the same sex to room together and adults of the same sex to room together.

- When possible, adults' rooms shall be next to youth rooms and youth may be checked on during the night.
- Ordinarily, adults should not share rooms with children. An individual minor may share a room with an individual adult if the two are related (parent/child), or if written permission has been granted prior to the event by a parent or guardian (in such cases as Intergenerational Mission Trips).
- In situations where one large sleeping area is provided, two adults of the same sex shall accompany children or youth of the same sex.
- In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms or on opposite sides of rooms, properly supervised by student leaders of the same gender.
- Staff and volunteers will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff and volunteers should never physically touch a student.

MEDICAL

- Each child, youth, adult volunteer, and staff must submit a completed medical/insurance form. Each minor's forms must have a parent or guardian's signature.
- Whenever possible, all activities with children and youth shall have a staff or volunteer adult leader with current-certification first aid/CPR training.
- Group leaders should have a copy of all medical forms for overnight or off-site events. These forms will be kept on the event site for the duration of the event.
- First Aid supplies will be available on the event site. All workers will be informed of the location of First Aid supplies/equipment and shall have access to information concerning specific medical conditions and concerns of participants.
- A written report will be completed in the case of any accident, medical emergency or injury.

DRIVING RULES/TRAVEL

- All drivers of children and youth shall be over 25 and under 65. In situations where this is not possible, parent permission shall be obtained before the trip and vehicles shall travel together.
- If it is necessary for an adult to take a child or youth home after an event, all an effort should be made to contact the family and inform them of the situation before transporting the child or youth. It is always advisable for leaders to give parents advance notice and full information regarding the event in which their child or youth will be participating.
- When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-leader rule still applies unless parental permission is obtained prior to the trip. When several

vehicles are taken for an event and two leaders are not available for every vehicle, keeping the other vehicle in sight at regular intervals is an acceptable substitution for the two-leader rule.

- No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving St. John Greek Orthodox Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented St. John Greek Orthodox Church, unless in an emergency.
- Travel arrangements for off-campus events will be coordinated through the church.
- All adult drivers of children and youth will be screened through a driving history search. **A valid driver's license and proof of insurance will be required.**
- Students should be transported directly to their destination.
- Seat belts will be provided for all passengers.
- Background screenings will not be required of volunteers who occasionally assist with children/youth (e.g., parent volunteer for particular event), but who do not regularly supervise youth activities, as long as such volunteers are under the direct and constant supervision of someone who has been screened.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

PHYSICAL CONTACT POLICY

St. John Geek Orthodox Church is committed to protecting students in its care. To this end, St. John Greek Orthodox Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy,' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Youth Ministry programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in the student program:

- Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and students are important for student's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Pastoral Assistant or the Rev. Father.
- Physical contact should be for the benefit of the student, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other students or student staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff or volunteers in the Student

Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.

- Do not force any physical contact, touch or affection upon a reluctant student. A student's preference not to be touched must be respected.
- Student staff and volunteers are responsible for protecting students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
- Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by staff or volunteers must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Pastoral Assistant or the Rev. Father.

POSITIVE AND APPROPRIATE FORMS OF AFFECTION INCLUDE:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- "High-fives" and hand slapping
- Verbal Praise.
- Touching hands, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Holding hands while walking with small children.
- Sitting beside small children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- Holding hands during prayer.
- Kissing on both cheeks when culturally appropriate.
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SOME INAPPROPRIATE FORMS OF AFFECTION INCLUDE:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Holding children over four years old on the lap.
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth.
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
- Wrestling with children or youth.
- Tickling children or youth.
- Piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing," or "You look really hot in those jeans."

- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
- Private meals with individual children or youth.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL NETWORKING AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

EXPECTATIONS

As a volunteer for St. John Greek Orthodox Church, you accept a great responsibility for nurturing the lives of young people, extending far beyond your interaction with them at church or at events. Young people will look to you as an example of Christian living, and may model many of their decisions based on what they see (or perceive) you doing, both on or offline. For this reason, you should carefully consider the content and nature of any type of communication with a young person.

- For the purpose of this Social Networking and Digital Communication Policy, content is defined as photos, videos, messages, posts, or any other information shared through social networking sites. In addition, this policy applies to any and all forms of digital communication, including but not limited to email, instant messages, texts, MMS, video chat, etc. One must also consider that any content posted online or digital communication, without its proper and original context, could be misconstrued, ultimately damaging the participants of this event and St. John Greek Orthodox Church.
- For your own protection and the protection of young people, **VOLUNTEERS ARE STRONGLY DISCOURAGED FROM ANY FORM OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION WITH A MINOR, INCLUDING BEING “FRIENDS” ON A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE.**
- In order to facilitate continued mentoring and dialogue online, it is recommended that event administration create “official” social networking groups or fan pages. This allows for healthy communication with young people in an open forum, rather than private communication with a young person.

STAFF POLICIES:

FRIENDS AND CONNECTIONS

- Volunteers are prohibited from initially contacting or requesting “friends” under the age of 18. Because you are in a position of authority as a volunteer, a young person may feel obligated to “accept” your friend request.
- If a young person requests your “friendship” on a social networking site, or if you are already “friends” with minors, you are strongly encouraged

to set stringent “privacy settings” in order to maintain appropriate boundaries.

APPROPRIATE CONTENT AND BEHAVIOR

- Any interactions with a young person through digital communication should be appropriate and professional and serve as a reflection of these policies.
- Volunteers must not use blogs, personal pages or websites to disparage the event, its staff, employees, other individuals, or St. John Greek Orthodox Church.
- Volunteers must not use social networking sites to share content prohibited by the event or St. John Greek Orthodox Church policies, and not consistent with an Orthodox Christian lifestyle. This includes the abuse of alcohol and drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment, bullying, or use of obscenities, profanity, or vulgar language.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

- If you receive any inappropriate digital communication or content from a young person, you must immediately notify your direct supervisor, i.e. Event Director, Pastoral Assistant, the Rev. Father etc.
- If a young person reveals abuse or inappropriate interactions of any kind with an adult, you must immediately notify your direct supervisor, i.e. Event Director, Pastoral Assistant, the Rev. Father.
- Any volunteer found to be in violation of any portion of this policy will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, and may include the volunteer’s immediate dismissal from the staff and exclusion from future programs, events and activities at the discretion of your direct supervisor, i.e. Event Director, Pastoral Assistant, and/or the Rev. Father.

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT of POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I have received and read a copy of St. John Greek Orthodox Church’s Student Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at St. John Greek Orthodox Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by St. John Greek Orthodox Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in my ministry position description. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the full term specified in the position description, I understand that my service is volunteer and that I can choose to end this relationship at any time (if possible, by providing two weeks’ notice to my supervisor).

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

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the volunteer policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer’s name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer’s signature

Date: _____

[This page to remain attached to the St. John Greek Orthodox Church Safety Policies]

