(POL-SECURITY) Safety & Security Team Policy

General Board Approved: May 31, 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the role, authority, expectations, and accountability of the Safety & Security Team of 1st Free Will Baptist Church.

The church desires to provide a worship and ministry environment that is welcoming, orderly, and safe. The Safety & Security Team exists to help protect the congregation, guests, staff, volunteers, children, youth, vulnerable adults, and church property during worship gatherings, ministry activities, and other approved events.

This policy is intended to provide clarity without creating unnecessary restriction. The goal is not to make the church feel guarded or unwelcoming, but to ensure that safety concerns are handled with wisdom, coordination, and care.

2. General Principle

The Safety & Security Team serves as a ministry of protection, awareness, and assistance.

Team members are expected to be calm, mature, observant, discreet, and helpful. Their role is to help prevent problems when possible, respond wisely when needed, and coordinate with the Lead Pastor, General Board, and emergency responders when appropriate.

3. Authority and Oversight

The Safety & Security Team operates under the authority of the Lead Pastor.

The Lead Pastor shall appoint a Safety & Security Team Leader to assist with the organization, scheduling, communication, training, and regular coordination of the team.

The Safety & Security Team Leader reports to the Lead Pastor.

The Lead Pastor has authority to approve, deny, suspend, or remove any person from the Safety & Security Team at any time. The Safety & Security Team Leader may also recommend removal or suspension of a team member to the Lead Pastor.

A current list of approved Safety & Security Team members shall be provided to the General Board.

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4. Team Membership

To serve on the Safety & Security Team, a person must:

- Be a member of 1st Free Will Baptist Church;
- Be at least 21 years old;
- Be approved by the Lead Pastor;
- Complete a background check;
- Sign a Safety & Security Team agreement or policy acknowledgment;
- Demonstrate maturity, sound judgment, self-control, reliability, and a cooperative spirit;
- Complete required team training;
- Agree to follow church policies and the direction of the Lead Pastor and Safety & Security Team Leader.

Service on the Safety & Security Team is a position of trust. No person has an automatic right to serve on the team.

5. Armed and Unarmed Team Members

The Safety & Security Team may include both armed and unarmed team members.

Unarmed team members may serve in important roles such as observation, communication, medical response, evacuation assistance, camera monitoring, weather response, crowd assistance, and care for vulnerable persons.

Armed team members must be specifically approved by the Lead Pastor to carry a firearm inside church facilities and must comply with the church's Firearms and Weapons Policy.

6. Requirements for Armed Team Members

An armed Safety & Security Team member must:

- Be legally eligible to possess and carry a firearm;
- Maintain a current concealed carry permit;
- Keep any carried firearm concealed unless responding to an imminent threat;
- Maintain control of the firearm at all times;
- Act in coordination with the Safety & Security Team and church safety plans.

An armed team member's authorization to carry inside church facilities continues unless revoked or suspended by the Lead Pastor.

7. Low-Profile Presence

The Safety & Security Team should normally operate in a low-profile manner.

The team is not intended to appear intimidating or to create an atmosphere of fear. Team members should be friendly, respectful, and approachable while remaining alert and prepared.

Team membership does not need to be publicly announced, but it should not function as a secret or unaccountable group. Appropriate members of the General Board shall know who is serving on the team.

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8. Responsibilities

The Safety & Security Team may assist with:

- Observing church grounds, entrances, hallways, worship areas, and common areas;
- Conducting reasonable security checks before, during, or after services and events;
- Monitoring security cameras or other safety-related systems;
- Watching for suspicious or unsafe behavior;
- Responding to medical emergencies;
- Responding to disruptive persons;
- Assisting with custody-related concerns;
- Supporting protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
- Assisting with severe weather response;
- Assisting with evacuation or sheltering;
- Responding to active threats;
- Communicating with the Lead Pastor, the General Board, ministry leaders, parents, guardians, and emergency responders when needed;
- Helping maintain a safe and orderly ministry environment.

9. Emergency Response Priorities

In an emergency or safety concern, team members should seek to respond according to the nature of the situation.

The team's priorities include:

- Observe and assess the situation;
- Communicate with team members, the Lead Pastor, and the General Board;
- Call 911 or request emergency assistance when needed;
- De-escalate when safe and appropriate;
- Protect children, youth, vulnerable adults, and other persons at risk;
- Evacuate, shelter, or direct people as appropriate;
- Intervene physically only when necessary and reasonable;
- Use force only as a last resort to protect life or prevent serious harm.

10. Use of Force

Safety & Security Team members are not authorized to use force except when it is reasonable and necessary under the circumstances.

Deadly force may be used only as a last resort in defense of oneself or others against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily harm.

Team members must understand that the use of force carries serious spiritual, legal, moral, and practical consequences.

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11. Authority to Remove a Person

Safety & Security Team members may ask a person to leave church property when the person is disruptive, threatening, unsafe, trespassing, violating church policy, or creating a concern for the safety or order of the church.

When possible, removal should be handled calmly, respectfully, and with another team member or church leader present.

Law enforcement should be contacted when a person refuses to leave, becomes threatening, creates danger, or when the situation exceeds the team's ability to respond safely.

12. Not Law Enforcement

Safety & Security Team members are not law enforcement officers unless they are separately employed or commissioned as law enforcement officers.

Serving on the Safety & Security Team does not give a person police authority. Team members serve under church authority and are expected to operate within the law, church policy, and the team's approved safety plans.

13. Training

Safety & Security Team members shall participate in training as required by the Lead Pastor or Safety & Security Team Leader.

Training may include:

- Team procedures and communication;
- Situational awareness;
- De-escalation;
- Medical emergency response;
- First aid, CPR, or AED training;
- Severe weather response;
- Fire and evacuation procedures;
- Active threat response;
- Child, youth, and vulnerable adult protection;
- Camera or building security procedures;
- Firearm safety and qualification for armed team members.

The team should participate in training at least annually.

14. Safety Plans and Procedures

The church may maintain safety plans, emergency procedures, or action plans separate from this policy.

These plans may address specific situations such as medical emergencies, severe weather, fire, evacuation, active threats, custody concerns, suspicious persons, children's ministry security, or building lockdown.

Safety plans may be shared with appropriate leaders, ministry workers, or the congregation as needed. Details that could compromise security may be kept confidential.

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15. Confidentiality

Safety & Security Team members shall keep sensitive safety information confidential.

This includes information about:

- Team procedures;
- Security vulnerabilities;
- Camera locations or blind spots;
- Emergency plans not intended for public distribution;
- Incidents involving individuals or families;
- Custody concerns;
- Medical situations;
- Security concerns involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

General safety instructions may be shared with the congregation when appropriate.

16. Incident Reporting

Safety concerns, medical emergencies, disruptive behavior, threats, use of force, firearm-related incidents, custody concerns, or other significant events shall be documented using an incident report.

Incident reports should be completed as soon as reasonably possible and submitted according to church procedure.

17. Records

Safety & Security Team records shall be maintained in the church's electronic church database or other approved secure location.

Records may include:

- Approved team member list;
- Background check confirmation;
- Policy acknowledgment;
- Training records;
- Firearm authorization records;
- Incident reports;
- Other safety-related documentation.

Access to these records shall be limited to those with a legitimate need to know for church leadership, safety, legal, insurance, or administrative purposes.

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18. Relationship to Other Policies

Safety & Security Team members are expected to follow all applicable church policies, including:

- Firearms and Weapons Policy;
- Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy;
- Abuse, Misconduct, and Incident Reporting Policy;
- Facilities Use and Building Stewardship Policy;
- Records Retention and Confidentiality Policy;
- Any other applicable safety or ministry policy.

19. Review

This policy shall be reviewed periodically by the General Board and may be revised as needed.

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