

SAINT FRANCIS EPISCOPAL CHURCH, HOLDEN, MASSACHUSETTS

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

The aim of this policy is to make our Church a safe place—safe for those who worship, safe for those who minister, safe for those who come in need, safe for children and safe for all who seek or serve Christ. We believe that this policy helps us live out our Baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being.

SCREENING, SELECTION, AND TRAINING FOR MINISTRY WITH AT RISK PERSONS*

The Diocese will perform background checks on all clergy who are deployed or licensed to officiate within the Diocese. The Diocese will also perform background checks on any diocesan employees or volunteers who regularly work with children or youth. St. Francis will do background checks on all employees and any volunteers who regularly work with at risk persons.

Background checks will include the following:

- a. a written application
- b. a public records check
- c. an interview
- d. reference checks

The more access an individual has to at risk persons, the more detailed the background check should be.

Volunteers should not be permitted to work with at risk persons until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least one year.

BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS FOR MINISTRY WITH AT RISK PERSONS

Adults shall never, under any circumstances:

- provide at risk persons with non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs or pornography
- consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any event for at risk persons
- be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs at any event for at risk persons
- engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior
- engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive relationship or conduct with any at risk person
- discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies with an at risk person

Firearms and concealed weapons are prohibited at any church activity. Clergy may make special exceptions for off-duty police officers or others required to carry firearms.

MONITORING PROGRAMS AND INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Plans for all events and ministries for children and youth should include at least two unrelated adults present at all times. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children and youths, that adult shall immediately report those circumstances to the Bishop's Office if it is a diocesan event or the Rector or Senior Warden if it is a parish event. It may be appropriate for a church school class to have only one teacher so long as at least one other adult can maintain visual contact with the teacher. All classrooms or space utilized for ministry with children and youth will have windows installed in hallway doors and those windows shall not be covered or blocked from view under any circumstances.

**"At Risk Persons" shall be defined as children, youth, the elderly, and any persons made vulnerable to abuse by physical, mental, or developmental limitations.*

Any new programs, trips or events that involve children and youth shall be given prior approval by the Rector and the Vestry. Those driving children or youth need parental permission and all drivers must have a valid driver's license and must be at least 21 years of age. Adults occupying vehicles with children or youth should include at least two unrelated adults (second adult must not be a member of the youth group). One adult is acceptable only if the children being transported are the children of the driver.

No event for children and youth shall take place in a private residence without prior approval by the Vestry.

Adults who work with children or youth within a congregation should be discouraged from having a separate and private relationship with any unrelated child from the church away from sanctioned church youth activities.

SOCIAL MEDIA/DIGITAL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Social Networking Sites – Relationships

1. Adults who wish to connect via a social networking website with youth to whom they minister are strongly encouraged to set up a closed group account that youth may join. Youth requesting to “friend” an adult may then be invited to join this group rather than be accepted as a friend on an adult's personal profile account.

Social Networking Sites – Groups

1. Closed groups will be used for youth groups (J2A, Rite 13, administrators, confirmation, pilgrimage, mission trips, etc.).
2. Groups will have at least two unrelated adult administrators. Additional requirements for administrators may be found in the parish's Computers and Media Policy.
3. Members of the group will be limited to active members of the youth group, parents/guardians of active youth group members, adult leaders of the youth group and the clergy. Adult leaders of youth groups and former youth members and their parents/guardians who, due to departure, removal from position, or are no longer eligible because they “aged out” of a program will be immediately removed from digital communication with youth groups via social networking sites, listserves, etc.
4. Any inappropriate material will be removed by the adult administrators.

Digital Communications and Content – Behavioral Covenants

1. Church-sponsored sites (and/or group pages) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL.
2. Content deemed inappropriate will be removed from the site or group page.
3. Church-sponsored sites (and/or group pages) should always display appropriate language.
4. Individuals may tag themselves in photos, but should not tag others.

Publishing/Posting Content Online

1. St. Francis will inform participants, either verbally or with signage, when they are being videoed or photographed.
2. St. Francis will provide forms to opt out of inclusion in any materials published or distributed by the parish that are to include any videos or photographs taken by St. Francis or on the behalf of St. Francis.
3. Photos that are published on church-sponsored sites will not include first and last names or contact information for minor children or youth.

COMPUTERS AND MEDIA

Parish computers, associated hardware (i.e., Wi-Fi) and software programs will be password protected and updated frequently. Access and use will be authorized by the Rector or persons appointed by the Rector. Authorized users shall be limited to staff, vestry and officers of the parish, and associated leaders

of ministries. Provisions for general public use of systems will be made as necessary (i.e., Wi-Fi for general use).

OVERSIGHT

St. Francis has a Safe Church Officer who is current on safe church issues and training and is not otherwise an employee of the parish. The Safe Church Officer should be consulted by the Rector, vestry members or others on safe church matters and should report all questionable or non-standard arrangements to the Rector or Warden. The Safe Church Officer and the Vestry will conduct a “safe church audit” annually in the summer to review practices and policies within the congregation.

These policies will be posted in areas where activities for at risk persons take place and will be given to all adults who regularly work with at risk persons and to parents.

HARASSMENT POLICY

It is the goal of St. Francis Church to promote an environment that is free of harassment—both sexual and non-sexual. Sexual or non-sexual harassment of church members, visitors, clergy, vestry or employees occurring in the church or in other settings related to the church will not be tolerated. Further, any retaliation against any person who has complained about harassment, or retaliation against any person for cooperating with an investigation of a harassment complaint, will also not be tolerated.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY- NON-EMPLOYMENT

While it is not possible to list all circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct, which, if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment, depending upon the totality of the circumstances including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwelcome sexual advances—whether they involve physical touching or not
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one’s sex life; comment on an individual’s body, comment about an individual’s sexual activity, deficiencies or prowess
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments
- Inquiries into one’s sexual experiences
- Discussion of one’s sexual activities

In addition to the above examples, other sexually oriented conduct, whether it is intended or not, that is unwelcome and has the effect of creating an environment that is hostile, offensive, intimidating or humiliating may also constitute sexual harassment.

NON-SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY - NON-EMPLOYMENT

Harassment, including bullying of a non-sexual nature, that interferes with our missions or ministries or otherwise creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for church members, visitors, clergy, vestry or employees occurring in the church or in other settings related to the church will not be tolerated.

If you would like to file a complaint you may do so by contacting the Rector, Associate Rector, Safe Church Officer or the Senior Warden. These persons are also available to discuss any concerns you may have and to provide information to you about our policy on harassment.

RESPONSE

Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies in a parish environment shall immediately report the violation to the Safe Church Officer, Rector, Associate Rector or Senior Warden. Anyone who knows of a

violation of these policies in a diocesan environment or by a clergy person shall contact the Diocesan Intake Officer to report the concern(s).

Anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse of an at risk person has taken place, whether at church or away from church, shall report it to the appropriate civil authority.

Rectors hearing reports of violations shall contact the Intake Officer in consultation about potential responses. The Rector and/or the Intake Officer shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or volunteer ministry with the church.

When the Intake Officer receives reports of violations by clergy or by adults at diocesan events, the Intake Officer shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action according to the canons of the Church, in consultation with the Bishop and the President of the Disciplinary Board.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

St. Francis will direct clergy, lay employees and volunteers who work with at risk persons to attend training on how to prevent abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings. St. Francis will maintain a record of those who have attended such training.

The Diocese will offer the requisite training. Individuals will attend re-training at least every three to four years. The Bishop's office will approve curriculum and trainers for the requisite training. Current training should be available for those who screen, train or supervise those who regularly work with at risk persons.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Rector of St. Francis Episcopal Church is Patrick Perkins, pperkins.stfrancis@gmail.com

The Associate Rector of St. Francis Episcopal Church is Karen Safstrom, karen.safstrom@gmail.com

The Senior Warden of St. Francis Episcopal Church is Bev Giarusso, bgiarusso@verizon.net

The Safe Church Officer of St. Francis Episcopal Church is Paul McIntyre, pmmedic@comcast.net

The Safe Church Officer for the Diocese is the Reverend Tanya Wallace, allsaintschurchrector@gmail.com. Contact her with general questions about trainings or safe church policy.

The Intake Officer for the Diocese is the Reverend Molly Scherm, mollyscherm@gmail.com. Contact her to report harassment or abuse by clergy or other diocesan employees.

The Bishop of Western Massachusetts is The Rt. Rev. Douglas Fisher, DFisher@diocesewma.org. Contact him with safe church concerns about any diocesan employee or program.

The phone number to report suspected child abuse in Massachusetts is: 1-800-792-5200 or you can call the Department of Social Services in your area.

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