



Safe Church Policies at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Relationships among people are the foundation of Christian ministry, and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies, codes of conduct, and guidelines is not meant in any way to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, such policies, codes of conduct, and guidelines are meant to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships. The aim of this policy is to make our church a safe place for those who worship, those who minister, those who come in need, children and youth, and all who seek or serve Christ.

The following Policy was adopted by the Vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church on December 7, 2016 and modified February 5, 2022, to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them.

SECTION I: CHURCH PERSONNEL

For the purposes of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Piney Parish.

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, who are engaged in ministry or service to the church
2. All paid personnel, full or part time, whether or not they work directly with children.
3. Adult volunteers in activities for children and youth, including any person who enters into or offers himself or herself to St. Paul's or who actually assists with or performs a service, such as a Eucharistic Visitor.
4. All volunteers, including members of the vestry, whose work routinely takes them throughout the facility or grounds or have a key to the building.

SECTION II: REQUIREMENT FOR ADULT VOLUNTEERS

1. Be known to the clergy and congregation for at least 6 months OR be a parent volunteer OR employee.
2. Complete Safeguarding God's Children training along with signature on attendance roster. Certification is to be renewed every three years.
3. Volunteer Application
4. Criminal Records Background Check

SECTION III: APPROPRIATE MONITORING FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. At all events or meetings involving children and youth there shall be at least two unrelated adults present. If unanticipated or emergency circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth, the period of time shall be kept as brief as possible and the adult shall immediately inform the Rector or the Senior Warden of the occurrence.
2. No event for children or youth shall take place in a private residence without prior notification of the Rector or in the case of the rector's home, without prior vestry notification. Adults who work with children or youth may not have private meetings with any unrelated child or youth away from sanctioned church activities. All meetings must take place with parental consent and in the visual presence of another unrelated adult.
3. Doors should be open at all times and children must be in direct supervision. In cases of loud noise, doors may be closed so long as there is a window on the door.
4. For activities outside regular Sunday morning classes, parents/guardians must complete a permission slip (unless parents are also attending the event).
5. One-to-one counseling with children and youth will be done in an open, public or other place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.
6. Adults may not give other children rides unless it is an emergency and only with written permission from a parent or guardian. When permission is granted, there must be two unrelated adults in the vehicle.
7. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before Church Personnel may transport children and youth for church for a church sponsored activity or for any purpose. No child or youth shall travel alone with an adult except in the case of an emergency, upon which parents and the Rector should be notified.
8. Church Personnel will relate to children and youth with respect, consideration, and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, culture or socioeconomic status. Church Personnel will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience and maturity.
9. Any suspected child abuse/neglect must be reported to the Rector immediately and an Incident Report completed that will be given to Child Protective Services (877-871-1177). Under no circumstances are reporters to conduct their own investigation.
10. Youth and children are not allowed in the church and in the upstairs education wing without adult supervision, this includes the periods following worship and during Activity Nights and other parish activities.
11. The assigned Vestry Person of the Day or other designated represented appointed by the Rector or Wardens is to serve as a safe-church monitor on Sunday mornings to ensure that no children and youth are left alone. Parents will be notified of policy and encouraged to monitor their children. All

parish-wide activities must designate one person to serve as a safe-church monitor with the expectation that he or she will circulate the building on an incremental basis with no more than 20 minutes passing between each increment

12. The following behaviors are prohibited when children or youth are present at church events, no matter where they are held:
- a. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
 - b. Engaging in illegal behaviors or permitting anyone present to engage in illegal behaviors. This includes carrying firearms and concealed weapons, except in the line of duty
 - c. Providing pornography to anyone present
 - d. Engaging in romantic, sexual, illicit or secretive behaviors with anyone present. Discussing personal sexual activities or fantasies with anyone present.

SECTION IV: GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE AFFECTION WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Stating which behaviors are appropriate and which are inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children and youth. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children and youth.

Appropriate forms of affection (Adults should always ask children for permission before any kind displaying even kind of affection, even of a casual nature)

- Hugs from the side with the child or youth's permission
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes or fist bumps
- "High-fives"
- 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
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate

Inappropriate forms of affection:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embrace
- Kisses
- Holding children over four years old on the lap
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than appropriate diapering and toileting
- Showing any kind of affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, restrooms, or other private rooms
- Occupying a bed or chair 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 and physical touch
- Comments (spoken, written or electronic) about physique or body development
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth
- Private meals with individual children or youth

SECTION IV: GUIDELINES FOR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world. Check your local applicable laws.

1. All communications sent digitally (email, social networking sites or platforms, notes, texts, or posts, etc.) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL and can be shared or reposted to others.
2. Do not submit connection requests (such as friend requests on Facebook or “Add Me” on Snapchat) to children or youth for personal interactions. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults.
3. All Zoom and online gatherings must have two unrelated adults in attendance.
4. Parents/Guardians are an additional adult un-related to the adult sender must be copied on emails to youth. Mass emails sent to an entire group are not required to be copied to parents or guardians.
5. Photos of children will not be uploaded to online platforms without written permission from parents or guardians.
6. Children and youth will not be “tagged” in online photos.
7. Adults will not communicate with Youth via “direct message” on Facebook or Instagram or any other communication setting that is private.
8. Adults will not engage in text conversations with youth.

SECTION V: POLICIES REGARDING LAY PASTORAL VISITATION

1. Pastoral visits may be done by lay-people within St. Paul’s ministries, as in the case of delivering communion or making pastoral visits. Adult lay ministers engaged in such tasks shall make every effort to travel in pairs and adhere to an open door policy, with due consideration for the privacy of the person being visited.
2. All persons engaging in pastoral visitation ministries must complete Safe Church Training as described above.
3. Adults exercising ministries of visitation in a private setting on behalf of the parish should document such visits and include the person(s) visited, and the date, time, a reason for, and length of the visit. Such documentation for all visits shall be logged in the Register of Pastoral Visits in the office. Brief visits to deliver holiday flowers or the customary gifts of food to newcomers do not require Safe Church Training, but in the event the delivery person is invited into the home, an open door policy should be observed.

SECTION VI: RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

1. Anyone who knows of a violation of this policy or the Diocesan Safe Church Policy in a parish environment shall immediately report the violation to the Rector and Senior Warden.
2. Anyone who has reason to suspect that child abuse has taken place, whether at church or away from church, shall complete an incident report for CPS and inform the Rector. Upon hearing a report of violation, the Rector shall contact the Bishop about potential responses.
3. The Rector and/or Diocese 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.
4. When the reported concern involves a clergy person, the Bishop shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action, up to and including canonical disciplinary action.

I agree that I have read and will abide by and enforce the Safe Church Policies of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Updated February 5, 2022