



**TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH
TRUMBULL, CONNECTICUT**

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Introduction

The *Baptismal Covenant* calls us to “respect the dignity of every human being.” This policy seeks to honor this call by providing a safe, joyful and holy environment for all the members of our congregation, especially the vulnerable among us including children, youth and the elderly. In addition to the specifics of this policy, Trinity adheres to all guidance and policies of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut as they pertain to children, youth, elderly, and electronic communications.

Screening Staff and Volunteers

When any of the following positions are filled at Trinity, the records checks and/or training indicated must be completed:

PUBLIC RECORDS CHECK for: clergy, choir director(s), commissioned ministry, youth minister, acolyte mentor, church schoolteachers, parish nurse, confirmation mentors, pastoral care teams, youth group leader, key holders, home visitors, Stephen ministers, and unpaid church staff.

CRIMINAL & CREDIT CHECK for: treasurer, assistant treasurer, and wardens.

AN APPLICATION & INTERVIEW for: clergy, choir director, commissioned ministry, youth minister, parish nurse, confirmation mentors, pastoral care teams, youth group leader, eucharistic visitors, home visitors, Stephen ministers, and unpaid church staff.

SAFE CHURCH TRAINING for: clergy, choir director, commissioned ministry, youth minister, acolyte mentor, church schoolteachers, parish nurse, teenage assistants, confirmation mentors, pastoral care teams, youth group leader, vestry-members, treasurer, assistant treasurer, wardens, altar guild members, building hosts, eucharistic visitors, home visitors, Stephen ministers, and unpaid church staff.

Safe Church Training must be renewed every three years and a record of such training must be kept on file in the church office.

Volunteers may be permitted to work with children, youth, or the elderly only if they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months and all applicable records checks and/or training has been completed.

Behavioral Standards for Ministry with Children or Youth

Adults shall never, under any circumstances:

- provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs or pornography,
- consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children’s or youth event,
- be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs at any children’s or youth event,
- 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 child or youth,
- discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies with children or youth.

Firearms and concealed weapons are prohibited at any church activity or in any church facility. Special exceptions may be made for off-duty police officers or others who are 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 or youths, that adult shall immediately report those circumstances to the Rector or Senior Warden. 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 (i.e. in an adjoining room).

Any new programs, trips or events that involve children or youth should be given prior approval by the Rector and the Vestry. No event for children or youth shall take place in a private residence without prior approval by the vestry.

Meetings between clergy or volunteers with children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall take place only in rooms where the door can be kept open or in which a window has been installed and that window shall remain uncovered so that at least one other adult can maintain visual contact.

The Vestry or other duly delegated parishioners will conduct a “safe church audit”, using the form at the end of this document, at least annually to review practices and policies within the congregation. Copies of the audit will be maintained in the parish office and forwarded to the bishop’s office.

Parents/guardians are expected to supervise and be able to see their children if they are playing on the church grounds, especially in the grassy area and woods behind the church.

Ministry to the Sick and Shut-Ins

Visits to parishioners in hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, assisted living facilities, and at private homes are subject to safe church policies. In the event that a visitor cannot be accompanied by another adult, the visitor must contact nursing staff for that unit, state their intent to enter the patient’s room and ask the staff person involved to check frequently during the visit. Where consistent with the facilities rules and procedures, doors to the room of the patient are to be kept open. When leaving, advise the nursing staff of departure. In the event that a visitor cannot be accompanied by another adult when visiting a parishioner in a private home, another adult must be present in the home in addition to the parishioner.

Education and Training

Clergy, lay employees and volunteers who work with children or youth, the elderly, homebound or hospitalized parishioners, are expected to attend Safe Church training on how to prevent child and/or elderly abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings. Safe Church training, conducted by the ECCT must be current (every three years) and records of such training will be maintained by the Parish Administrator.

Internet Safety and Media

The Internet and publishing media are gifts facilitating rapid and effective communication, education and the spread of the Good News. Parish media include: our website and parish email, the Trumpet, weekly announcements and parish bulletin boards. On occasion, in order to highlight the events and life of our parish, pictures of members of our community may be posted on printed and electronic media with their permission. Every effort shall be made to figure minors in groups of two or more. NEVER under any circumstances shall a name or contact information of any minor be posted on the internet or in printed media.

We recognize that photographs of parish events are frequently posted on the boards in the Peet Parish Hall, the Narthex, and the hallway. This is a way of celebrating the life of our parish. However, parishioners have the right to ask that a picture that features them be removed from a parish bulletin board. The removed picture shall be returned to the parish office.

Responding to Concerns:

By law, both the Rector and the Church School Director are “mandated reporters” required to immediately report to civil authorities any suspected instances of abuse or neglect involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

When abuse or neglect is disclosed or suspected in good faith, volunteers and staff shall make this known directly, in person, to the Rector. In the context of the Church School, the Church School Director shall also be informed in person.

Anyone who has reason to suspect that child abuse has taken place, whether at church or away from church, shall report it to the appropriate civil authority. The Rector, upon hearing report of a violation, 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. The Bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy, or by adults at diocesan events, 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.

Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies in a parish environment shall immediately report the violation to the Rector and Senior Warden. Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies in the ECCT environment or by a clergy person shall immediately report the violation to the Bishop’s office.

Contact Information

The Safe Church Officer for the ECCT (Robin Hammeal-Urban) can be reached at (203) 639-3501 x 122. rurban@episcopalct.org The phone number to report suspected child abuse and neglect in Connecticut is: (800) 842-2288.

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For any questions about creating and maintaining safety in the parish, please contact the Rector (203-376-2952 acmurchie@gmail.com) or the Senior Warden (203-723-8488 rbpitz@att.net)

Safe Church: Creating a Healthy Environment for Children, Youth & Vulnerable Adults
Annual Safe Church Self-Audit
Congregations and Organizations

Audit Year: _____

Name of Congregation/Organization: _____

Address of Congregation/Organization: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Policy Confirmation

- We have a Safe Church policy for the Protection of Children and Youth that is consistent with the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, which meets or exceeds that of the 2019 Model Policy, and is appropriate for our congregation or organization.

Date Adopted: _____ Date Reviewed: _____

- We have a Safe Church policy for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults that is consistent with the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, which meets or exceeds that of the 2019 Model Policy, and is appropriate for our congregation or organization.

Date Adopted: _____ Date Reviewed: _____

Screening of Ministry Leaders

- There is a well-understood process, in accordance with the above Screening and Training Protocols, which includes:
- A written application,
 - A personal interview,
 - Verification of personal references, and
 - Public records check, updated every 5 years

Individual records of these procedures are located _____
and _____ has access to them.

NOTES: _____

Training of Ministry Leaders

- All leaders, paid or volunteer, have completed the appropriate Safe Church training, according to the above Screening and Training protocols; and
- Certification of training is renewed every 3 years.

Records of completion of this training are located: _____

NOTES: _____

Safe Program Space

- There are always two or more unrelated adults present in ministry setting and events designed for children and youth.
- All program space whose primary use is for children and youth is visually accessible.
- Alcoholic beverages are not stored in publicly accessible areas of the church buildings.
- Publicly accessible computers with internet access are password protected and children and youth use church computers only with supervision.
- Keys to church spaces are limited to people who have met all requirements for screening and training.
- No one is denied the right, status, or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class.
- To the furthest extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry are accessible.

NOTES: _____

Responding to concerns and incidents

There is a well-understood procedure for responding to concerns and/or incidents of the suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children and youth, which includes

- Contact information for the local Child Protective Service,
- Contact information for the appropriate person to report to in the Diocese, Congregation and/or Organization
- Steps to take when you have concerns, and
- Who to contact

Copies of these procedures are located: _____

NOTES: _____

There is a well-understood procedure for responding to concerns and/or incidents of the suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of vulnerable adults, which includes

- Contact information for the local Department of Social Services (DSS) for elders,
- Contact information for the local Department of Developmental Services (DDS) for adults with intellectual disabilities,
- Contact information for the appropriate person to report to in the Diocese, Congregation and/or Organization
- Steps to take when you have concerns, and
- Who to contact

Copies of these procedures are located: _____

NOTES: _____

Program Documentation

There is documented approval from the governing body, and individual parental approval for:

- All programs for children and youth that are hosted off-site,
- Sexually explicit conversation or program content and
- Screening of media rated PG-13 or above

There is documented approval from the governing body for:

- All programs for adults that are hosted off-site

The following documents are on file for all programs involving children and

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youth:

- Registration forms,
- Media release forms,
- Medical authorization and release forms,
- General waiver & release and transportation permission forms for off-site programming, and
- Volunteer driver forms for those transporting children and youth

Records of these procedures are located: _____

NOTES: _____

The following documents are on file for all programs involving adults:

- General waiver and release forms (for offsite events)
- Media release forms,
- Medical authorization and release forms (for multiple-day event), and
- Volunteer driver forms for those transporting other adults

Records of these procedures are located: _____

NOTES: _____

Has your congregation fully complied with the Model Safe Church policies and practices over the past Year?

- Yes
 No

Please note it is understood that implementation of the new policies will take time. If there are areas where you are out of compliance, please identify them and, if needed, reach out to the ECCT Safe Church Administrator to assist you with this process.

Name of the person completing this form: _____ Date of C