



**TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
TRUMBULL, CONNECTICUT**

**POLICY  
FOR  
A  
SAFE  
CHURCH**

### **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**

Background checks will be performed on all clergy and employees and all volunteers who regularly work with children, youth or vulnerable adults. This process will include the following:

- a written application
- a public records check
- an interview
- reference checks

Volunteers may be permitted to work with children, youth or the elderly if they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months.

### **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.

It is recommended that the Vestry or other duly delegated parishioners conduct a “safe church audit” at least annually to review practices and policies within the congregation. 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](mailto:rurban@episcopalct.org) The phone number to report suspected child abuse and neglect in Connecticut is: (800) 842-2288.

For any questions about creating and maintaining safety in the parish, please contact the Rector (203-326-0302 [paulcarling@att.net](mailto:paulcarling@att.net)) or the Senior Warden (203-386-1991 [simon.l.howes@gmail.com](mailto:simon.l.howes@gmail.com))