

SAFE CHURCH POLICY AND PROCEDURES  
FOR ST. JAMES'S 2015



ST. JAMES'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## SAFE CHURCH POLICY

### ***St. James Episcopal Church is committed to:***

- promoting the safety and wellbeing of all its members,
- providing safeguards around ministry to children and young people,
- creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation.

All persons associated with St. James should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment<sup>1</sup> and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. These guidelines and procedures are intended to promote a culture of safety and prevent possible harm.

St. James Episcopal Church is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation (for definitions, please see below). Specifically, all persons associated with St. James's church should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy.

### **Ministerial Conduct**

All persons engaged in the ministry of St. James's Church (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaging in the ministry of St. James is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within the congregation.

### **Protecting Children and Young People**

St. James's Church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. To support this commitment, St. James has in place protocols and practices which are intended to promote safety and prevent harm. These are shown in the diagram below and (where appropriate) can be accessed through the following links.

For further information, please contact the Rector at 617.547.4070

This policy is reviewed biannually by the Vestry of St. James.

## DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE:

- **Physical abuse** is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
- **Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth.
- **Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.
- **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.
- **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.
- **Economic exploitation** is the deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of a child or youth's belongings or money.

## SAFE CHURCH GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR YOUNG CHURCH<sup>1</sup> STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS<sup>2</sup>

These guidelines and procedures are intended to support the implementation of the *St. James Episcopal Church Safe Church Policy*<sup>3</sup>. They outline common practices and procedures, including expectations of leader/volunteer behavior and support mechanisms, which are all intended to promote a safe healthy environment for children, young people and those who work (in both paid and volunteer capacities) with them.

### 1 Recruitment and Ongoing Support of Volunteers

*Where members of St. James are interested in ministry to young people and children, the following processes are followed:*

- The (potential) volunteer discusses the options for ministry with the Associate Rector/ Director of Church and Family Ministry and other established leaders. The intention of this is to give a clear picture of the usual activities and expectations involved in ministry to children and young people.
- If the volunteer wishes to join the young church ministries, then:
  - An agreement is made as to where/how they will volunteer (which group, frequency etc.).
  - A CORI check is conducted.
  - A *Volunteer Registration Form and Agreement* is signed. This includes a commitment to undertake Safe Church training (online or in person) every three years, and abide by safe church practices, participate in ongoing training and support sessions organized by St. James.

St. James aims to provide ongoing support young church leaders and helpers so that they can engage fully with the ministry that is entrusted to them.

*This is done through:*

- Clear guidance and procedures (such as these).
- Regular training, fellowship and support sessions. This includes three training/ fellowship sessions per year, a leaders “check in” session approximately every six weeks throughout the academic year and support with curriculum planning and delivery. One-on-one support from clergy and established church school leaders is also available and encouraged as appropriate.
- Guidance as to appropriate behavior, and what to do in the event that the volunteer has concerns about an aspect of young church or the behavior of another volunteer/ leader or church member.

## 2 Safe Practices and Boundaries

The Diocese of Massachusetts and St. James Parish are committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our church staff and volunteers from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate; otherwise that decision is left to each individual. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows staff and volunteers to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. These Guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for future abuse. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all staff and volunteers working around or with children or youth.

### *The following practices are observed in official/organized young church activities:*

- A Risk Assessment Review is undertaken biannually (usually by a small group of skilled volunteers delegated to the task by the Vestry) to identify risks and incorporate risk prevention practices in advice and guidelines to young church staff and volunteers.
- In all young church activities, at least two registered volunteers (aged over 21 years) must be present.
- The parents/guardians of church school children and young people must complete a *Registration Form*, which includes details of any allergies and issues of concern, and emergency contact details.
- For activities outside regular Sunday morning classes, parents/guardians must complete a permission slip (unless parents are also attending the event).
- Children and young people must abide by rules for safe walking getting to and from church school venues, and also safe behavior during Sunday morning sessions, and if this does not occur then their parents/caregivers will be asked to provide support so that this is possible.

### *Young Church staff and volunteers:*

- Must not, in their voluntary capacity, be alone with a child/youth or multiple children where other adults cannot easily observe them.
- Are not permitted to develop new activities for children and youth without approval from the rector or canonical equivalent.
- Will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or social-economic status. Staff and volunteers will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience and maturity. They will avoid even the appearance of favoritism.

- Are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
- Are prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth.
- Are prohibited from possessing any sexually orientation materials (magazines, cards, videos or materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.
- Church Personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags, tents, hotel rooms or other rooms with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all children or youth in the bed, sleeping bag, tent, hotel room or other room. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep with all the children or youth participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge.
- Are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth unless as part of authorized swimming/sports activities.
- Are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.
- Are prohibited from using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.
- Are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry or camp activities.

Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining **positive and safe boundaries** with children and youth.

*Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:*

- Gentle pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- “High-fives” and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, 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

*The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse:*

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children over three years old on the lap
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth
- Wrestling with children or youth
- Tickling children or youth
- 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
- Inappropriate comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, “You sure are developing,” or “You look really hot in those jeans.”
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth
- Private meals with individual children or youth

### **3 Reporting Concerns**

#### **Reporting Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy violations with children or youth**

When St. James young church staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with, or which may violate any provision of the *Safe Church Policy*, they must immediately report their observations. Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would be seeking private time with children or youth, taking children or youth on over-night trips without other adults, swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth, or selecting or using staff or volunteers to lead activities without the required screening.

***Such inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported in one of the following ways:***

- A telephone call or meeting with the immediate supervisor of the person,
- A telephone call or meeting with the rector, if the person is not the rector;
- A telephone call or meeting with a church warden if the person is the rector;
- A telephone call, meeting or email to the diocesan Intake Officer, the Canon to the Ordinary at the diocesan office. To reach the Intake Officer at the diocese, connect to the diocesan website at [www.diomass.org/clergy-disciplinary-process](http://www.diomass.org/clergy-disciplinary-process) or call 617-482-4826, ext. 402.

All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth will be taken seriously by St. James Church.

### **Reporting Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth**

All staff and volunteers are required by this policy to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state authorities. Please see “Mandated Reporters Guide” PDF for a guide to mandatory reporting in Massachusetts.

Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth may be a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, “in good faith” means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.

In addition to reporting to the state authorities, staff and volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Church Personnel directly to the rector of St. James Parish so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims.

***Reports of suspected or known abuse that involve Church Personnel may be reported to the Diocese of Massachusetts in the following ways:***

- A telephone call or meeting with the rector, if the rector is not the person being complained about.
- A telephone call, meeting or email to the the Intake Officer, the Canon to the Ordinary. To reach the Intake Officer at the diocese, connect to the diocesan website at [www.diomass.org/clergy-disciplinary-process](http://www.diomass.org/clergy-disciplinary-process) or call 617-482-4826, ext. 402.

The Diocese of Massachusetts and St. James Parish will cooperate with any investigation by state authorities to the fullest extent appropriate and inform authorities that a concurrent internal investigation will be directed by the Diocese of Massachusetts.

<sup>1</sup> St. James “Young Church” refers to all official ministries to young people and children 16 years and under (and so includes Nursery). “Church School” refers to the activities for 4–16 year olds which take place primarily on Sunday mornings, with occasional organized social and other events outside this time.

<sup>2</sup> Much of this material is adapted from The Church Pension Group, *Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse*

<sup>3</sup> Implementation Date: September 2014

## ST. JAMES'S SAFE CHURCH OUTLINE

### 1 St. James's policies and documents

St. James's Safe Church Policy Overview

Safe Church Guidelines and Procedures

Volunteer Agreement

Children and Youth Registration Forms

Practical Guidelines for Sunday Morning

References for new volunteers

Procedures and forms for registering and responding to concerns

### 2 References

Massachusetts Guidance for Mandatory Reporters

Diocese of Massachusetts Safe Church Handbook

### 3 Activities

Risk Assessment

Safe Church Training

CORI check

Volunteer training and support



## ST. JAMES'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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