

# Safe Church Policy of St. John's, Hingham

St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, in affirming the Baptismal Covenant that all baptized persons vow to accept, will, with God's help, strive to respect the dignity of every human being. In more concrete terms, the Church will strive to be a safe, secure place where members and visitors to the congregation alike, caregivers, teachers and leaders, paid or volunteer, ordained or lay, minister appropriately to the manifold needs and concerns in the world about us.

## Protection of Children

**The PROTECTION of children is of paramount priority to this church.** It is the policy and practice of St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church to strictly prohibit interaction with children and youth by anyone with a known civil or criminal record of child sexual abuse or who has admitted prior sexual abuse or anyone known to have a paraphiliac diagnosis (e.g., pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism) as defined by the American Psychiatric Association.

## Sensitivity

**We are SENSITIVE to the personal, physical boundaries of others.** We practice "mirroring"; i.e. we embrace only when the other initiates the action and both are comfortable with the action. We condone appropriate expressions of touch: brief hugs, pats on the back (where initiated by the other), handshakes, "high-fives" and hand slapping, verbal praise (avoiding comments about physical appearance), an arm lightly around shoulders, holding hands during prayer (but not interlacing fingers), and gently touching the hands, face, arms and shoulders of small children.

## Awareness

**We are AWARE of the actions and behaviors of others.** We are conscious of appropriate interaction between adults and children. We are vigilant for signs that children, elders, and the physically and mentally challenged are being mistreated both inside and outside the church. We will screen all employees and volunteers who work with children, elders, or the disabled and those handling parish funds. Such workers will:

1. If a volunteer from the congregation, be a member of the congregation for at least 6 months
2. Complete a written application
3. Undergo a CORI background check every 3 years
4. Have no history of abuse whether or not on record
5. Supply references which will be checked
6. All employees and volunteers engaged in ministry with minors, elders, and the physically and mentally challenged both inside and outside the church will be required to participate in Safe Church awareness training within six months of entering into such ministry.

Copies of this Safe Church Policy are available on the website, in all classrooms, the library and church office.

## **Fairness**

**We practice FAIRNESS when a person does not live up to our Safe Church values.** In a case of alleged abuse or misconduct, we will contact the Bishop's office. All allegations of abuse shall be reported to relevant law enforcement authorities in accordance with provisions of state law relating to reports of such abuse. All cases will be treated within the bounds of appropriate confidentiality.

## **Education**

**We EDUCATE ourselves about the issues that make the church a safer place.** All volunteers who work with children and youth undergo the online "Safeguarding God's Children" training and attend a debriefing session to discuss Safe Church issues. We believe that the dialogue about safe church practices is ongoing and important.

## **Community**

**We are a COMMUNITY that functions better when we work together.** When working with minors, two adults will be present at all times (or employ a roving adult). We embrace an open door policy and encourage parents to stop in at unscheduled times. We promote visibility in all situations, including private consultations.

## **Health**

**We celebrate that our church is a place of HEALTH and wholeness.** Sexual misconduct, abuse, harassment, and exploitation of any kind are not tolerated. Our leadership will maintain proper pastoral boundaries and personal self-care disciplines. Our physical plant improvements will promote safety with clear signage, first aid kits, fire safety protocols, and adequate lighting.

## **Universality**

**We make these values UNIVERSAL by extending them to our lives outside the church.** We will strive to recognize and celebrate that these values help us live out our Baptismal Covenant. We will strive to treat others with honesty, empathy, and respect. We treat social media interactions with minors as public communications.

## **Respect**

**We strive to RESPECT the dignity of everyone and seek and serve Christ in all persons.** We engage only in appropriate, positive, constructive speech. Discrimination based on gender, race, religion, creed, color, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental challenge, medical condition, marital status, age, or sexual orientation is not tolerated.

## **Hospitality**

**We extend HOSPITALITY toward all who come to the church.** Our church is a place for healing and wholeness where all are welcome. We live by these values, promoting a community where all people can worship God in a loving, caring, and nurturing environment.