

Trinity Episcopal Church Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth

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I. THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS	2
II. EXPECTATIONS AND LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION	3
III. DEFINITIONS	3
IV. APPLICATION AND SCREENING	6
A. Public Records Checks	6
B. Additional Screening Requirements	6
V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING	7
VI. MONITORING AND SUPERVISING PROGRAMS	7
A. Unrelated Adults Required	8
B. Creating Safe Space for Children and Youth	8
C. One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth	9
D. Basic Needs	9
E. Inclusiveness	10
F. Violence and Weapons	10
G. Behavioral Standards for Adults in Ministry with Children or Youth	11
H. Special Considerations for Off-Site Programming	12
I. Overnight Programs	14
J. Transportation	15
K. Camps and Retreat Centers	15
L. Travel	16
VII. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS	18
A. Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Children and Youth	18
B. Suspected Violations of this Policy	18
C. Local Resources for Response	18
VIII. POLICY ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND AUDIT	20
A. Diocesan Adoption, Implementation, and Audit	20
B. Congregation and Organization Adoption, Implementation, and Audit	20
IX. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM	21
Appendix A: Screening and Training Protocols	22
Appendix B: Practices and Guidelines for Electronic Communications and Social Media with Children and Youth	24
Appendix C: Procedural Details for Application and Screening, Education and Training	27
Appendix D: Resources for Reporting Concerns Regarding the Protection of Children and Youth	28

I. THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld the Word’s glory, glory as of the only Child from God.”

— John 1:14 (*An Inclusive Language Lectionary*)

God expressed the fullness of humanity in Jesus of Nazareth, whom we worship as the Word made flesh. To be human is to live with God and the whole of creation in the fullness of freedom and the challenge of responsibility. The pattern of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection resonates unreservedly with God’s call to perfect freedom and responsibility.

In baptism, God, speaking through the Church, claims us in Christ. We become, in Christ, the community of God’s final purpose: justice and peace, love and plenty for the whole creation. This new community lives in Eucharistic fellowship with God and Creation, as a sign and instrument of God’s reconciling purpose in the world.

The Church is called to embody and advance God’s mission. Ministry is the vocation of the whole community: laypersons, deacons, priests, and bishops who together represent Christ and the Church in the world.

The obligation to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being is binding for all the baptized. The authority with which **Leaders** — ordained persons and adults who minister with minors (**children** and **youth**), and youth in leadership roles — are entrusted, creates an inherent power imbalance in the **pastoral relationship**. This power imbalance derives from the leadership role and, in the case of clergy, the symbolic authority of an ordained person. Christian leadership is intended to provide occasions for guidance and grace, and its abuse is always and unequivocally wrong.

Ministry involves a necessary tension between a Gospel-based integrity and a Gospel-based intimacy as modeled by the life of Christ. A rigid adherence to a system of rules leads to an unproductive legalism. Yet, without the framework of the law, the intimate relationships into which Christ calls us risk distortion and harm. All the people of God are called to minister attentively within this tension. These model policies are intended to provide a pattern for attentive practice of ministry.

This document is based on a model policy provided by the Episcopal Church; it sets forth expectations for Trinity Episcopal Church’s leaders in their relationships with children and youth. The purpose of these policies is to foster the highest standards of behavior in ministry settings.

II. EXPECTATIONS AND LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

This policy sets forth statements of expectations and guidelines of behavior for ordained and lay people in the church when engaged in ministry with children and youth. Such a policy is mandated for all such activities sponsored by every congregation, institution, organization, school, and agency of each diocese. The purpose of these policies is to create safe and welcoming space for all children and youth in our communities and those engaged in ministry with children and youth and to prevent all types of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional; neglect) in the church.

This document is based on the Episcopal Church's model policy, with adjustments to fit the characteristics of Trinity Episcopal Church. All adjustments were made with the intention of allowing the model practices to work for our congregation. All additions or revisions are intended to meet or exceed the requirements of the model policy.

Church governing bodies and all Leaders should understand these policies and all local requirements thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments and should consult with the Office of the Bishop when unanticipated situations arise.

No policy can foresee every possible circumstance to which it may be applied. Whenever applicable, questions of civil, criminal, and/or ecclesiastical discipline and employment offenses should be addressed with the relevant authorities immediately. Please contact the Office of the Bishop for consultation and resources if assistance is needed.

III. DEFINITIONS

NOTE: These definitions reflect our understanding of terms describing gender identity and sexuality, which are evolving as this policy is being written.

Adult: Anyone who is 18 years or older and not in high school.

Bullying: Behavior that intimidates, humiliates, offends, degrades, or harms another person, whether verbal, psychological, social, physical, or otherwise.

Child: Anyone under the age of 12 years.

Child Protective Services: A social services program provided by state and local governments serving children and their families who need assistance. Child Protective Services receive and investigate reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Cisgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their gender or sex assigned at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Gender Non-Binary: An umbrella term for people who identify their gender as neither male nor female. These people might identify as both ("bigender"), neither ("agender"), a mix between the two ("genderfluid"), or they can be unsure of their gender

("genderqueer"). This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Intake Officer: The person(s) designated by each diocese to receive information regarding an offense for which a member of the clergy may be held accountable under *Title IV of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church*, which sets out the disciplinary process for clergy. Anyone may contact an Intake Officer to report concerns.

Leader: A person, adult or youth, who, for the benefit of another, engages in ministry without responsibility for oversight of others engaged in that same ministry. Examples include Sunday school teachers, camp counselors, and program team.

LGBTQ+: An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others. It refers to people whose gender identities vary from their gender or sex assigned at birth, or whose sexual orientations differ from the heterosexual majority. The "+" is an effort to include additional gender identities. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Mandated Reporter: A person who is required by state law to report reasonable suspicions of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of vulnerable populations to the appropriate state agency. In New Jersey, "[a]ny person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse, including sexual abuse, or acts of child abuse shall report the same immediately to the Division of Child Protection and Permanency by telephone or otherwise." N.J. Stat. Ann 9:6-8.10.

Off-Site: Any location other than the sponsoring Episcopal Church, institution, facility, or campus.

Organizations: All institutions for which the diocese or congregations have legal or fiduciary responsibility (examples: diocesan departments, commissions, conference & retreat centers, adult day care centers, retirement communities, religious orders, congregations, schools, etc.).

Overnight: Any event that starts on one calendar day and ends on a different calendar day.

Pastoral Relationship: Any relationship (1) between a Member of the Clergy and any person to whom the Member of the Clergy provides or has provided counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction or spiritual guidance, or from whom such Member of the Clergy has received information within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent, or (2) between a lay minister and any person to whom the lay minister is offering prayer, ministry, and/or any person from whom the lay minister has received sensitive, personal, or confidential information in the course of offering ministry.

Programs: Official activities and programs sponsored by The Episcopal Church and its provinces, dioceses, and congregations (examples include: The Episcopal Youth Event, Provincial Youth Events, Happening, Teens Encounter Christ, pilgrimages, mission experiences, New Beginnings, camp programs, Acolyte Festival, etc.).

Public Records Check: A search of documents and data available to the public including criminal and civil court records, credit reports, and driving records from the department of motor vehicles. Typically, such searches are conducted by a third party with expertise in this area.

Responsible Person: The person designated as being accountable for compliance with this policy for an event or program, *identified in Appendix D*

Sacramental Alcohol: Consecrated wine used in the setting of Eucharist

Sexual Misconduct: A broad term encompassing any behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or capacity for consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same or different gender.

Supervisor: A person who has oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or for Leaders in a ministry program. Supervisory positions are identified in Appendix A.

Title IV: A section of the *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church* pertaining to clergy professional standards, accountability, and ecclesiastical discipline.

Transgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with the gender or sex assigned to them at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Training: Organized activity designed to provide information and/or instructions to strengthen and enhance the recipient's understanding, capacity, and exercise of ministry.

- **Universal Training:** A standard of training that will foster a culture of safety and inclusion for all people that includes a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries. This training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant.
- **Specialized Training:** A standard of additional training that equips people who participate in or have oversight responsibility for ministries. In addition to Universal Training, a person will have access to training that is specialized and tailored to their role and ministry function.

Youth: Anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older and still in high school.

IV. APPLICATION AND SCREENING

Our congregation and other associated organizations are required to screen all persons according to the standards in the *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)). For some positions, screening consists only of a Public Records Check. For other positions there are additional screening requirements of a written application, interview, and reference verification.

A. Public Records Checks

- Our congregation and other associated organizations shall use a provider approved by the Diocese to conduct public records checks. Such checks must be completed before the employee or volunteer begins interacting with children and youth;
- Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records and sex offender registries;
- A Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records check is needed if regularly transporting children and youth as part of, or an extension of, ministry of the church or for a church-sponsored event;
- A credit check is required for persons with check signing authority; and
- Public records checks must be updated at least every five years.

B. Additional Screening Requirements

Written application, interview, and reference verification are required before serving in certain roles and ministries as specified in the *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)). Where required, these components are generally conducted in the following order:

- Submission of a completed written application to serve in a specified role with a clearly defined, written “job description.” The application includes verifiable personal information;
- Personal interview;
- Reference verification conducted by the congregation and/or other organizations to verify personal information and check references listed in the application (people who know but are not related to the applicant); and
- Maintenance of these records as described below.

Potential Leaders or Supervisors must be known and active in the congregation for at least six months before engaging in ministry with children and youth, unless they undergo public records checks and reference checks pursuant to the *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)).

Our congregation and other associated organizations will keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the congregation's or organization's office.

All persons required to undergo Universal Training shall be provided a copy of this policy before they begin their position. An acknowledgement by each person that they have read this policy shall be maintained by their Supervisor. Refer to the ***Acknowledgement Form*** (Section IX).

Refer to ***Procedural Details for Application and Screening, Education and Training*** ([Appendix C](#)) for additional explanation about how Trinity will ensure compliance with this section of the policy.

V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Training shall be appropriate to each person's function according to the ***Screening and Training Protocols*** ([Appendix A](#)).

All Leaders shall have Universal Training that fosters a culture of safety and inclusion for all people and covers a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries. Universal Training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant. All members of the Episcopal Church shall have access to this training.

In addition to Universal Training, persons holding certain roles identified by the Diocese will have Specialized Training tailored to their role and ministry function. The positions requiring Specialized Training will be determined by the Diocese; Trinity will facilitate Specialized Training as it is made available by the Diocese.

Certification of training shall be renewed every three years.

Our congregation and other associated organizations with responsibility for programs with services or ministries to children and youth shall keep records sufficient to evidence compliance with this policy.

Refer to ***Procedural Details for Application and Screening, Education and Training*** ([Appendix C](#)) for additional explanation about how Trinity will ensure compliance with this section of the policy.

VI. MONITORING AND SUPERVISING PROGRAMS

A Responsible Person or Persons shall monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, children, and youth to ensure appropriate behavior and healthy boundaries in all Trinity programs.

All people who minister to children and youth must have ongoing supervision. Ongoing supervision should consist of regular check-ins by the Supervisor, who may be parish clergy or a team leader. Such supervision shall review the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry with the person engaged in the ministry. Each person engaged in such ministry should know who supervises their ministry and how to contact the Supervisor at all times.

Our congregation and other associated organizations shall ensure that all people who minister to children and youth receive prior training as to the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry.

Our congregation and other associated organizations shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons with their contact information approved to minister to children and youth. This list shall be kept in the organization's office or other place where records are kept.

A. Unrelated Adults Required

There shall be at least two unrelated adults (at least two years older than the eldest participant) present at ministry settings and events designed for children and youth. (See also specific requirements for off-site programming in ***Special Considerations for Off-Site Programming*** (Paragraphs H and L in this section)). If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth, that adult shall report those circumstances to the Supervisor, clergy in charge, a warden, or Responsible Person as soon as possible.

Only one adult may be sufficient in well-monitored, visually accessible program space on the church grounds, such as a Sunday School classroom, provided that a rule of three is adhered to (i.e., a minimum of one adult and two children/youth), doors to the room are kept open, *and* an individual has been assigned to conduct frequent random checks of classrooms and unlocked spaces throughout the building(s).

See also sections on ***Overnight Programs*** (Paragraph I in this section) and ***Transportation*** (Paragraph J in this section).

B. Creating Safe Space for Children and Youth

To create a safe space, it is necessary to anticipate and avoid circumstances in which children and youth are exposed to inappropriate consumables, materials, unmonitored adult contact, or unsupervised peer contact.

For example:

- **Alcoholic beverages.** Alcohol (sacramental or otherwise) shall not be stored in publicly accessible areas of the church buildings.
- **Computers and electronic devices.** Children and youth shall have adequate supervision when using electronic devices belonging to dioceses, congregations, and other organizations. Devices shall have adequate password

protection. Normally, each user shall have their own account and password; however, when this is infeasible (such as when a single device is designated as the controlling device for recording or transmitting worship services) the Supervisor shall monitor to ensure appropriate use of the device. See *Practices and Guidelines for Electronic Communications and Social Media with Children and Youth* ([Appendix B](#)).

- **Persons with keys and access to locked spaces.** Anyone with keys or electronic access to church buildings shall meet all the requirements for screening and training according to the *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)).
- **Unused spaces.** Spaces not in use should not be readily accessible. Rooms should be locked when not in active use. Spaces that are isolated or hidden should be made inaccessible or, where that is not possible, should be made visible to the extent possible and regularly monitored.

C. One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth

When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth, another unrelated adult is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation.

Examples include:

- Planned or unplanned on-site conversations can take place in a public location, away from where others can hear but in view of other adults.
- Planned off-site conversations/meetings can take place in a public place (such as a coffee shop or restaurant) in view of other adults. A Responsible Person shall be informed about the appointment or plans in advance.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation because of mandatory reporting laws. If a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation or any other issue impacting their safety, it shall be reported to the persons identified in Resources for Reporting Concerns Regarding the Protection of Children and Youth ([Appendix D](#)).

Impulsive, secluded or secretive activity, online or in person with children or youth, might foster a high-risk situation, and is therefore to be avoided. See *Practices and Guidelines for Electronic Communications and Social Media with Children and Youth* ([Appendix B](#)).

D. Basic Needs

No one is to be deprived of the basic human needs of food, drinking water, shelter, sleep, access to restrooms, safety, and clothing at any event.

Exceptions may be made for programs intended to teach children or youth about poverty, need, and hunger, such as an intentional fasting program. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by fasting or missing sleep. Participants who wish to withdraw or who are unable to complete the program must have their basic needs immediately met.

E. Inclusiveness

No one shall be denied rights, 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 extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be accessible.

The Episcopal Church seeks to support all children and youth by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary children or youth who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child or youth's ability to keep their status confidential. They should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity.

Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned to the use of a single facility).

Adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than the youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided. See section on ***Overnight Programs*** ([Paragraph I in this section](#)).

F. Violence and Weapons

- No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
- Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.
- Children and youth shall not have weapons of any kind at any event or program for children or youth. Exceptions to this restriction may be made for camp programs or other specific programs with prior approval.
- Report suspected violations immediately. See ***Suspected Violations of this Policy*** ([Section VII, B.](#)).

G. Behavioral Standards for Adults in Ministry with Children or Youth

Adults who work with children and youth are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships that children and youth deserve in all settings. Interactions should meet all requirements outlined above, and adults should be discouraged from initiating a private relationship with any unrelated child or youth from the church away from sanctioned church activities.

DOs: Adults are encouraged to:

- Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include: daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;
- Spend time with and listen to children and youth, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;
- Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include:
 - high fives and fist bumps;
 - hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer;
 - brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms;
 - “laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision;
 - brief hugs and arms around shoulders; and
- Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior.

DON'Ts: Adults shall not under any circumstances:

- Provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- Consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an 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; or

- Apart from planned pre-approved educational programs, discuss their own sexual activities, fantasies, or their own use, or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children or youth.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall take steps as outlined in *Responding to Concerns* ([Section VII](#)).

H. Special Considerations for Off-Site Programming

Off-site programs, trips, and events where children and youth are not accompanied by their own parents/legal guardians present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. But they are also a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional development of children and youth. To enable these experiences while protecting children and youth, additional steps should be taken as described below. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site.

In the event of uncertainty about application of the policy, the Responsible Person should contact their Supervisor with the relevant queries.

1. Prior Approvals

- Prior written approval of the program, trip, or event by the Rector or by both Wardens is required before any off-site programming.
- Written approval of a parent/guardian is required prior to viewing any movie, whether offsite or on-site, rated “PG-13” or above, or participating in any conversation or program containing sexually explicit or violent content.
- These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, hosting such events as cook outs, pool parties, progressive dinners, etc.

2. Registration, Waiver and Release, and Permission Forms

- All children, youth (and adult Leaders, chaperones, or Supervisors) shall complete and sign a registration form and a waiver and release form before participating in any off-site programs. If medical and other sensitive information is included in the forms, confidentiality must be preserved. Such forms can encompass a program year.
 - There must be a parent/guardian’s signature on all release and waiver forms for minors.
 - Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site or online.
- Permission slips shall be provided for each off-site event and shall be signed by the parent/guardian.

- Prior permission for a minor to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required from a parent/guardian.
- For local events in which a child's or youth's own parent/legal guardian is in attendance, the Rector in consultation with the Wardens shall determine whether such forms are required. That decision shall be communicated in written form.

3. First Aid and Medications

- Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with children and youth.
- A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.
- A record must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant. This record shall include the participant's name, the date and time of service, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication, dosage, and/or treatment given.
- All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and the Responsible Person. Exceptions may include inhalers, epi-pens, and birth-control pills.
- Only the Responsible Person, or their adult designee, shall administer medications.

4. Supervision

- At any off-site gathering of children or youth, there shall be at least two unrelated adults with one being age 25 or older, preferably reflecting the sex and gender identity of the participants.
- Minimum ratios of adult to child/youth shall be in accordance with American Camp Association (ACA) guidelines as follows:
 - 5 years & younger — 1 adult for each 5 overnight-participants and 1 adult for each 6 day-participants
 - 6–8 years — 1:6 for overnight, and 1:8 for day
 - 9–14 years — 1:8 for overnight and 1:10 for day
 - 15–18 years — 1:10 for overnight and 1:12 for day
- Additional adults can provide skills, mentorship, support, encouragement, spiritual guidance, and joy.

- When new leaders-in-training are accompanying children/youth in programming, the leadership teams should also have a reasonable number of experienced adult leaders to provide support.

5. Insurance

All trips to off-site destinations must have insurance coverage in case of emergency. Before any new, special, or unusual events, the Leader is responsible for working with a Supervisor and our insurer to ensure appropriate coverage.

I. Overnight Programs

In overnight programming, particular attention will be given to historically excluded or unrecognized people, such as LGBTQ+ and disabled individuals. In a situation of unequal power and safety, preferences of these individuals merit additional consideration, accommodation, and action to ensure:

- Participant privacy;
- Maximization of social integration of all participants;
- Minimization of stigmatization of any participants;
- Equal opportunity to participate; and
- Safety of all participants.

Other guidelines for overnight programs:

- The safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires dioceses, congregations and other organizations to consider numerous factors, including, but not limited to: age, sex, gender identity and expression, and privacy. Adults must have separate showers or separate times for showers from children and youth.
- Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
 - No bed, cot, or sleeping bag shall have more than one person sleeping in it.
 - Supervision by two unrelated adults is required in any space where one or more youth are sleeping. On this point, hotel room stays follow different guidelines, which are detailed below.
 - It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
- Participants shall have access to three substantial meals each full day and access to sufficient water.

- Participants shall be given the opportunity for at least seven hours of sleep each 24-hour period, except for programs where parental/guardian permission is given to miss sleep. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by missing sleep.
- Participants shall have some time set aside each day for rest or free time.

Best practice guidelines for hotel stays:

- One child or youth per bed, including cots, pullouts or hide-a-beds, and rollaway beds;
- At least 2 children or 2 youth in each room.
- Adult Supervisors or chaperones have rooms on the same floor, scattered among the rooms with children or youth, and at least one adult room is by the stairs or elevators;
- Adult Leader assigns rooms and room occupants;

J. Transportation

For the health and safety of all participants, the following practices shall be followed:

- In all cases where transportation of children/youth is arranged by the congregation, a rule of three shall be adhered to (i.e., a minimum of two adults and one child/youth or one adult and two children/youth) in every vehicle.
- In all cases where transportation of children/youth is arranged by the congregation, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license.
- Persons whom the congregation arranges to regularly serve a driver must pass a satisfactory DMV records check.
- All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for the transportation and safety of their children and/or youth to and from the event. This responsibility includes the transportation of any other passengers in their vehicle.

K. Camps and Retreat Centers

All camps, camping programs, and retreat centers of the diocese shall follow the guidelines for off-site programming established in this policy. In addition, camps should aim to follow American Camp Association standards to the best of the camp's ability.

L. Travel

Travel with children and youth presents amazing opportunities for participants to experience the church and the world on a larger scale with vastly different perspectives of faith communities and their contexts. It also presents challenges to normal safety protocols and opportunities for creativity if managed well. The following policies will help groups prepare for a variety of potential scenarios, as well as for domestic and international travel.

1. Adult Leaders and Chaperones

- Minimum ratios of adult to youth need to be greater due to the possibility of leaving an adult behind with a participant in the event of a medical emergency.
 - 9–14 years — 1:5
 - 15–18 years — 1:7
- Regardless of group size, no group should travel with fewer than three adult chaperones.
- One adult, minimum age 25, should serve as the travel administrator who is responsible for all aspects of the trip, including carrying all necessary documentation, contacts, and forms including:
 - medical releases;
 - community covenant;
 - emergency contacts;
 - itineraries; and
 - cash and/or credit card capacity to address emergencies.
- It is a best practice that, one adult, minimum age 25, should hold a current medical certification to manage administration of necessary and permissible medications, administer immediate and necessary first aid, and triage medical situations to determine if care of an individual needs to be taken to a higher level of care. When this is not possible, one person should be designated to supervise the administration of medications as instructed on medical release forms, and a clinic near your destination should be identified ahead of time in order to respond to health emergencies as rapidly as possible.
- Acceptable medical certifications include:
 - Wilderness Medical Response
 - Outdoor Emergency Care
 - Emergency Medical Technician/Paramedic
 - Nurse — RN/LPN/Nurse Practitioner

- Physician's Assistant
- Medical Doctor
- Best practice is to designate an adult to serve as back-up to the travel administrator, and as back-up for simple first aid and administration of prescriptions. These could be the same person.
- A copy of all documents should be left with an accountable person at the diocesan, congregation, or organization's office. That person should also serve as the local emergency contact person for communications between the traveling group and families at home.

2. Insurance for Travel

- All trips to off-site destinations must have insurance coverage. The Leader is responsible for working with a Supervisor and our insurer to ensure appropriate coverage.
- It is recommended that all travelers carry evidence of personal health insurance by virtue of a copy of the actual card provided to the insured person.

3. International Considerations

- Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
- Make certain that every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date.
- Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
- Arrange to have at least two cell phones with the group that will have active coverage in your destination(s). Make a back-up plan for communication with your Responsible Person at home.
- A more thorough list of international travel considerations with links to U.S. and global organizations can be found in the *Youth in Mission Manual* here: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/youth-ministries/mission-manual/> (live link as of October 2024).

VII. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

A. Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Children and Youth

Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place are required to contact the State of New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency. In New Jersey, all persons are mandatory reporters.

In addition, anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place within a facility or program of the diocese, congregation, or other organization, should immediately inform the following:

- The bishop or the bishop's office in the case of a diocese;
- Clergy in charge or a warden in the case of a congregation;
- The director, head, or other governing officer in the case of other organizations; and/or
- The Intake Officer in case a member of the clergy is suspected of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation.

B. Suspected Violations of this Policy

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall immediately report the violation to the Responsible Person *and* either the Rector or the Wardens.

Clergy in charge receiving reports of violations of this policy 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 unpaid ministry with the church. If the Responsible Person is a lay person, they are responsible to ensure that appropriate pastoral care is provided for all.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies by a member of the clergy shall immediately report the violation to the bishop's office and/or the Intake Officer. Anyone can make a report to an Intake Officer.

The bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy, or by laity 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, as provided by Title IV of the Constitutions and Canons and/or termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the diocese.

C. Local Resources for Response

Our congregation and other associated organizations shall provide a list of local resources that can give information and assistance to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate this policy. Such resources with contact information shall include:

- Responsible Person(s) for programs and ministries with children and youth;
- Clergy in charge of a congregation;
- Wardens;
- Bishop;
- Intake Officer(s); and
- Child Protective Services.

An updated list shall be maintained as ***Resources for Reporting Concerns regarding the Protection of Children and Youth*** ([Appendix D](#)). It will be published online and posted in a place visible to the congregation.

VIII. POLICY ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND AUDIT

A. Diocesan Adoption, Implementation, and Audit

As of the date of the adoption of this policy for Trinity Episcopal Church, the Diocese of New Jersey is in the process of updating its Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth. When that policy and its associated procedures are adopted, our congregation will update this policy in a timely fashion to be consistent with the requirements in the Diocesan policy.

B. Congregation and Organization Adoption, Implementation, and Audit

This *Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth* shall be posted online and (in summary form) in an area where activities take place, and shall be given to all adults, guardians, and all paid and unpaid persons who minister to children or youth. These policies shall include the names and phone numbers of the member of the clergy in charge, the wardens, and a contact person in the bishop's office.

Our congregation and other affiliated organizations will conduct an annual Safe Church self-audit to confirm compliance with safe church policies. The audit will review that our policies remain in compliance with diocesan and national church policy, and that our procedures continue to follow the policy. A record that the audit has been completed will be kept as part of Trinity's records.

Procedures to be confirmed by audit will include (but are not limited to):

- Public records checks, application forms, records of screening and reference verification of paid and unpaid persons;
- Records of compliance with *Screening and Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#));
- Procedures for responding to concerns and incidents; and
- Evidence of compliance with "safe space" requirements.

IX. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

As part of my role as _____ for Trinity Episcopal Church, I have read the ***Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*** and will abide by all its requirements and recommendations.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix A: Screening and Training Protocols

Please see Section IV (Application and Screening) for further details

Screening and Training Chart	Ministry Function	Public Records	Application/ Interview/ Reference	Universal Training & Provided Policy	These positions are "Leaders" as defined by the policy	These positions are "Supervisors" as defined by the policy
Staff & Contracted Ministers (not covered below)	Church Employees	X	X	X		X
	Clergy	X	X	X		X
	Church contractors (1099)	Depends on access/role		Depends on access/role		
Program Supervisors						
	Child/Youth Choir Director	X	X	X		X
	Choir Director	X	X	X		X
	Director of Youth and Children's	X	X	X		X
	Youth Minister	X	X	X		X
	Other Child/Youth Supervisors	X	X	X		X
Program Participants (non-supervisory)						
	Acolyte Mentor/Coordinator	X		X	X	
	Choir Assistants or Adult Accompanists			X		
	Church School Teacher	X	Known & active in congregation	X	X	
	Youth Group Leader	X	Known & active in congregation	X	X	
	Nursery Volunteer	X	Known & active in congregation	X	X	
	High School-aged assistants			Youth-specific training	X	
*Off-site	Confirmation mentors	X		X	X	
	Lay Chaplains	X	Known & active in congregation	X		X
	Pastoral Care Teams	X	Known & active in congregation	X	X	

Drivers	Drivers with regular driving responsibility	DMV		X		
Governance	Check signers or financial account managers	Criminal & Credit			X	
	Treasurer	Criminal & Credit		X	X	
	Vestry			X	X	
	Wardens	Criminal & Credit		X		X
Key Access	Property Committee	Recommended		Recommended		
	Altar/Flower Guild	Depends on access/role		Depends on access/role		
	Building Hosts	Depends on access/role		Depends on access/role		
	Outside group leaders	Depends on access/role		Depends on access/role		
	Preschool Staff (*Administered by the Preschool)	X	X	X		
Home Visitors	Eucharistic Visitors	X	Known & active in congregation	X	X	
	Home/Stephen Visitors	X	Known & active in congregation	X	X	
*Off-site: Any location other than the sponsoring Episcopal church, institution, facility, or campus.						

Appendix B: Practices and Guidelines for Electronic Communications and Social Media with Children and Youth

Communication via electronic methods is a feature of modern life. These methods present opportunities to share information and connect with members of the congregation and the public, but they also come with unique challenges and problems. Posted content may be used out of context and out of the control of the originating individuals and organizations, putting them at risk. In addition, these powerfully connective tools are subject to the same dynamic of unequal power and potential for abuse that present a risk in all ministry relationships. Churches face the challenge of identifying and proactively addressing areas of potential risk in electronic communications, including but not limited to social media, amid rapidly evolving technology.

General Information about and Guidelines for Digital Communications

- Behavior in the digital sphere is never private. 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.
- When interacting with youth and children in the virtual world, all communications need to be transparent; that is, occurring in such a way that it is easy for others to see.
- In the virtual world, healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- In the virtual world, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality, and expectations for relationship.
- 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. Legal rules and ethical norms still apply in virtual spaces.
- Digital communications often provide a good method of communication, but they present challenges in interpreting meaning and tone that are different than in-person communications. If a youth or children’s ministry Leader receives digital communication that raises concerns, they should not respond immediately and should share the communication with a Supervisor and/or parent before responding. Phone and face-to-face meetings are preferred when responding to emotionally driven communications, pastoral emergencies, or where a referral to a professional provider or resource is needed.

Trinity’s Use of Electronic Communications

- With respect to youth and children’s ministry, Trinity’s communications will largely be through the use of the Remind (or equivalent) app and email.

Texting, phone, video calls, and (a limited use of) social media may also be used. The following points provide specifics on how these communication platforms may be used.

- **Remind Communication App**
 - Trinity will use the Remind (or equivalent) app as a communication platform for its Children and Youth Ministries. Trinity's Children and Youth Leaders can use the app to communicate with parents and youth. All messages to children or youth will be sent to an entire class; no messages will be sent to an individual child or youth.
- **Email, Text, Phone, Video Calls**
 - Any youth who wants to share their phone number and/or email address with a Trinity Leader must submit a signed consent form from the youth's parents. The youth will never be contacted in a one-on-one communication; all communications will include either a group or another adult.
 - Prudent judgement should be used with respect to the time of day a child or youth is contacted digitally or by phone. Refrain from exchanging emails or group texts before 8:00 am or after 9:00 pm, unless it is an emergency.
 - No child or youth will be contacted via one-on-one text or call unless it is an emergency. All texts must be to an entire group or must also include the child's or youth's parents or another adult Leader.
 - Video calls will follow the same criteria used in telephone calls. In addition, prudent judgement regarding attire and surroundings should be observed.
 - When sending emails to a child or youth, a copy should be sent to the parents or guardians as well. Mass emails sent to an entire group are not required to be copied to parents or guardians.
- **Social Media**
 - Trinity's social media accounts are managed by Trinity's Office Manager and supervised by the Rector, both of whom have access to the account. Posts will be professional and of a public nature with the purpose of publicizing church events.
 - Trinity will not employ the use of digital groups on social networking sites (such as a Facebook group page) for youth or children's programming or communication. In the future, if Trinity decides it is in its best interest to start using digital groups for Children and Youth Ministries, Trinity will first establish a policy of best practices to adhere to.

- Trinity will not identify or “tag” any individual in its online posts or photos. Trinity will also not caption any photos with an individual’s name. Trinity’s social media settings will be set so that a person cannot “self-tag” in a Trinity online photo or video.
- No Leader shall use their personal social media accounts to attempt to cultivate a relationship with a youth or child with whom they do not have a preexisting familial or social relationship.
 - Leaders shall not request that a youth or child connect to them via social media (such as friend requests on Facebook or “Add Me” on Snapchat).
 - Leaders shall not send private messages or group messages to youth or children via social media.
 - Trinity does not have a responsibility to review or monitor the personal pages or groups that are not sponsored by Trinity.
 - All Leaders, aware of their position in Trinity’s community, should exercise prudent judgment in their online communications.

Photo and video use

- When using photos and videos for ministry purposes, a media release will be obtained for each child and youth (from a parent/guardian) and only images that respect the dignity of every person depicted will be posted.
- Notwithstanding the foregoing, no media releases will be required for children and youth that are captured in the recording of worship services.
- Trinity will inform participants when they are being videoed because church buildings are not considered public space. This includes when a service or activity will be broadcast, streamed, or distributed on the web or via other broadcast media. Disclosure may be made either by signage, print explanation (e.g. within the worship program) or by oral announcement.

Appendix C: Procedural Details for Application and Screening, Education and Training

The following details are provided to facilitate consistent application of this policy. Staffing changes may necessitate shifting of responsibilities; updates to this Appendix C should be made to reflect those changes in a timely manner.

All screening (e.g. job descriptions, background checks) is administered by and records retained by Trinity's Office Manager. All training (e.g., Safe Church, distribution of this Policy) is administered by and records retained by the Director of Children's and Youth Ministries. For the Office Manager position, the Director of Children's and Youth Ministries position, and any position that supervises those positions, the Rector or Wardens shall ensure that appropriate screening and training has been completed.

Background Checks are completed through Praesidium. Trinity's Office Manager facilitates the background checks by providing information to applicants to enable them to submit their information directly to Praesidium. Results of those who have completed the appropriate screening protocols are available on Trinity's online Praesidium portal.

Safe Church Training is provided through the Diocese of New Jersey. The Director of Children's and Youth Ministries sends the names of the individuals who need training to the designated Diocesan staff person, who sends the appropriate Universal and Specialized Training to the person to complete. The Office Manager and the Director of Children of Children's and Youth Ministries collect completion certificates from the individuals and upload them to Trinity's shared drive.

The Director of Youth and Children's Ministries will submit the names of all volunteers in youth and children's ministries to the Office Manager before the volunteer begins so that the appropriate screening and training can be completed.

Appendix D: Resources for Reporting Concerns Regarding the Protection of Children and Youth

Contact Trinity's Office Manager, Kate Stefanko, at kstefanko@trinitymoorestown.org or Trinity's Director of Children's and Youth Ministry, Michelle Seaman, at mseaman@trinitymoorestown.org for contact information for the below listed individuals.

Trinity Episcopal Church has adopted a ***Policy for Protection of Children and Youth***. The full policy is posted online and will be provided to all those ministering to children or youth as well as other Supervisors and Leaders within the congregation. All members of the congregation are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the contents of the policy by accessing the document online or requesting a copy from the office.

Any person who has concerns regarding *any Trinity program* involving children, youth, or other vulnerable populations or suspects a *violation of Trinity's Policy* for the Protection of Children and Youth *shall* immediately report their concern to the Responsible Person and either the Rector or the Wardens. The Bishop's office may also be notified.

- Responsible Person(s) for programs and ministries with children and youth: Michelle Seaman, Director of Youth and Children's Ministry,
- Responsible Person for Trinity Preschool: Nancy Johnson, Preschool Director,
- Rector: Rev. Emily Mellott,
- Wardens: Jeff Wojcik and Dave Shaw
- Diocesan Contact: Clare Gutwein

Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a *child* has been abused or neglected has a *legal responsibility* to report it to the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (formerly DYFS).

- The Child Abuse Hotline (State Central Registry) receives reports of child abuse and neglect 24-hours a day, 7-days a week.
 - 1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873)
 - 1-800-835-5510 (TTY)
 - 24 hours a day - 7 days a week
 - Calls can be made anonymously.

Any person who suspects a violation of these policies *by a member of the clergy* shall immediately report the violation to the Diocesan Intake Officer.

- The Rev. Canon Karin Rasmussen Mitchell is the Intake Officer for the Diocese of New Jersey