

Summary Trinity Episcopal Church Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth

(Based on a model policy from the Episcopal Church, and adopted by Trinity's Vestry in November 2024)

Screening, Education, Training, and Review

- Our congregation will conduct public records checks for all staff and volunteers working with children and youth, using a provider approved by the Diocese and updated at least every five years.
- All Leaders shall have Universal Safe Church 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. This training is provided through the Diocese and shall be renewed every three years. All children's and youth ministry leaders must also provide signed acknowledgement that they have read our full policy.
- Our congregation will conduct an annual Safe Church self-audit to confirm compliance with safe church policies.

Monitoring and Supervising Programs

- 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.
 - Only one adult may be sufficient in 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).
- Unused spaces should be locked when not in active use and anyone with keys and access to locked spaces shall meet all screening and training requirements.
- 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.
- Off-Site Programming has special considerations concerning specific health, safety and supervision requirements and will require registration forms, permission forms, and waivers.

Practices and Guidelines for Electronic Communications and Social Media with Children and Youth

- 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.
- 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. 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. The same "visibility" standards apply to social media and other online interactions.

- All communications sent digitally 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. In the virtual world, healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- 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.
- 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). No media releases will be required for children and youth that are captured in the recording of worship services.
- Social Media
 - Trinity's social media accounts are managed by Trinity's Office Manager and supervised by the Rector. 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.
 - Trinity will not identify or "tag" any individual in its online posts or photos.

Fundamental Principles

- 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.
- 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, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class.
- 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.

Responding to Concerns

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

- Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child or youth has taken place is required to contact the State of New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency. In New Jersey, all persons are mandatory reporters. 1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873)
- Anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child or youth has taken place within a facility or program of the diocese or congregation, should immediately inform the following:
 - Clergy in charge or a warden, in the case of a congregation
 - Rector: Rev. Emily Mellott
 - Wardens: Jeff Wojcik and Dave Shaw
 - The Intake Officer, in the case a member of the clergy is suspected of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation, or a violation of this policy
 - The Rev. Canon Karin Rasmussen Mitchell is the Intake Officer for the Diocese of NJ
- Anyone who suspects a violation of **this policy** shall immediately report the violation to the Responsible Person and either the Rector or the Wardens.
 - Responsible Person for children and youth ministries: Michelle Seaman
 - Rector: Rev. Emily Mellott
 - Wardens: Jeff Wojcik and Dave Shaw