

Safe Church Policy
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Wallingford, CT

At St. Paul's we strive to live up to our motto: "In this church there will be no outcasts." This extends beyond welcoming all people into our church community and includes ensuring the safety and dignity of everyone – adults, children, clergy, staff, and interns – in our worship, educational, social and other activities. Indeed, as Episcopalians, we affirm in our Baptismal Covenant that we will "respect the dignity of every human being." In order to live according to this promise, St. Paul's is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which all can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination harassment, exploitation or intimidation. Bearing in mind that Jesus teaches us to love others and forgive trespasses, St. Paul's will take action to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this commitment.

The following guidelines are examples of how we at St. Paul's demonstrate our respect for all in the church community:

All are welcome at public worship. All of St. Paul's ministries seek to be inclusive and non-discriminatory; selection of leadership and committee members is transparent and inclusive.

All members of our parish community – children, adults, staff, interns, clergy – must feel safe from harassment and intimidation. No forms of sexual harassment or misconduct will be tolerated. Any complaint of such actions will be dealt with as quickly and confidentially as possible. We will make certain that responses to any allegation of sexual harassment or misconduct are just and compassionate for all involved and that all parties are heard. Harassment includes behavior that is not welcome by the recipient and that is personally offensive; it includes both actions and comments of a sexual or personal nature that are unwelcome. These might include, but are not limited to the following examples, that can be communicated in any form, whether in person or via written or electronic media.

- Inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance
- Unwelcome sexual comments, jokes, gestures or leering
- Gender-based harassment or discrimination
- Undesired physical contact
- Threats or misuse of power
- Providing or displaying pornographic material
- Sexual assault

We are committed to preventing any type of abuse, harassment, or exploitation of vulnerable members of our community, especially children and elders. This will be accomplished through Safe Church training, appropriate supervision of those who

interact with children and elders, and ongoing education/awareness in the community.

As a community that relies heavily on volunteers, we promote mutual respect in all volunteer activities. This means that we respect the contributions and efforts of all volunteers, and we must respect the responsibilities we take on when we volunteer.

We comply with Safe Church guidelines as established the Episcopal Church in Connecticut as well as all State and Federal laws. In particular, we require that there are always at least two adults working with groups of children. All staff, interns, Vestry members, Lay Eucharistic Visitors and volunteers who regularly work with children off-site and/or others in isolated situations are required to attend Safe Church training. The schedule for this training is found on the website episcopalct.org.

Reporting concerns:

For general concerns about the climate of the community or other minor issues, members of the parish are encouraged to engage in open dialogue with any member of the Vestry and/or the Rector so that we can work together to create positive and constructive responses. It is important to express any concerns early so that problems may be addressed.

Any person who believes that they have experienced or witness abuse, sexual harassment, or misconduct, or have had such an issue reported to them should report it immediately to one of the following:

- The Rector, or
- The Senior or Junior Warden, or
- The Bishop [or Pastoral Response Coordinator] in cases involving the clergy.
- Intake Officers of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. (Office of Mission Integrity and Training at episcopalct.org)

Any suspicions of child or elder abuse or neglect should be reported to the Rector or Wardens. The Rector is a mandated reporter.

In response to any of the previous types of reports, a prompt inquiry will take place, respecting the confidentiality of those involved and following diocesan guidelines. A Warden and the Rector (or both Wardens if the Rector is a party) will interview all concerned and gather information to help achieve a fair and appropriate resolution. The resolution may vary depending on the severity of the situation but could include counseling, education, removal from a position, and/or reporting to church or government authorities.

Prevention efforts:

This policy document will be given to and reviewed with all clergy, interns, staff and other parishioners as appropriate, and included in the annual Vestry Orientation.

This policy will be shared with the congregation in writing and through various methods of discussion, including sharing ideas of how to respond to and report concerns at least annually.

Safe Church certification is required of all staff, interns, Vestry members, Lay Eucharistic Visitors and parishioners who work with children off-site and/or others in isolated situations.

~Adopted at November 11, 2014 Vestry meeting