

The Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee

Safe Church Policy (2023)

This policy includes the following segments:

I. Theological and Ethical Foundations	1
II. Expectations and Local Implementation	3
III. Definitions	4
IV. Application and Screening	8
A. PUBLIC RECORDS CHECKS	8
B. ADDITIONAL SCREENING REQUIREMENTS	8
V. Education and Training	9
VI. Monitoring and Supervision Of Programs	10
A. UNRELATED ADULTS REQUIRED	10
B. CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR MINISTRY	11
C. ONE-TO-ONE CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH	11
D. BASIC NEEDS	12
E. INCLUSIVENESS	12
F. VIOLENCE AND WEAPONS	13
G. BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS FOR MINISTRY WITH VULNERABLE POPULATIONS	13
H. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR OFF-SITE PROGRAMMING	15
I. VISITS TO PRIVATE RESIDENCES	
J. VISITS TO RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES	17
K. OVERNIGHT PROGRAMS	18
L. TRANSPORTATION	19
M. CAMPS AND RETREAT CENTERS	19
N. TRAVEL	20
VII. Responding To Concerns	22
A. SUSPECTED ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH	22
B. SUSPECTED ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR EXPLOITATION OF A VULNERABLE ADULT	22
C. SUSPECTED VIOLATIONS OF THIS POLICY	23
D. NOTIFICATION TO THE DIOCESAN OFFICE	23
E. LOCAL RESOURCES FOR RESPONSE	23
F. GUIDANCE ON MAKING REPORTS	24
VIII. Policy Adoption, Implementation, and Audit	25
A. DIOCESAN ADOPTION	25
B. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND AUDIT	25
C. FAITH COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZATION ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND AUDIT	26
Appendix A: Screening and Training Protocols	27
Appendix B: Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications	28
Appendix C: Guidance on Making Reports	33
Appendix D: Anti-Harassment Policy	35

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), youth, and vulnerable adults 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 a statement for the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee, setting forth expectations for its leaders in their relationships with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The purpose of these model policies is to foster the highest standards of behavior in ministry settings. The document includes:

- **Screening and Training Protocols** (Appendix A), which explains the level of screening and training required before engaging in ministry with the vulnerable population(s) (children, youth, and vulnerable adults);

- A description of requisite training that is specialized and tailored to ministry role and function;
- Behavioral standards designed to ensure that vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) and all who engage in ministry with them are treated with dignity and respect in all settings;
- ***Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications*** (Appendix B);
- ***Guidance on Making Reports*** (Appendix C); and
- ***Anti-Harassment Policy*** (Appendix D).

II. EXPECTATIONS AND LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

This diocesan model policy provides in one place all of the content covered in The Episcopal Church's *Model Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*, its *Model Policy for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults*, and its *Model Anti-Harassment Policy*.

This model policy sets forth statements of general expectations and guidelines of behavior for ordained and lay people in the church when engaged in ministry with vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults). This policy is mandated for all such activities sponsored by every Faith Community, institution, organization, parish schools and preschools and other ministries of the Diocese. A school that is a member of the National Association of Episcopal Schools with the consent of the Bishop may, but is not required to, adopt this policy or a portion of it, or it may continue to use the previous Safeguarding God's Children Policy or adopt its own policy. The purpose of this policy is to create safe and welcoming space for all vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) in our communities and those engaged in ministry with vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) and to prevent sexual abuse.

This policy is a model and, as such, it presents best practices for creating such safe space. Circumstances in many localities may make some of these best practices difficult to implement or even unworkable. As a result, local entities may make additions or revisions in developing local policy so long as they meet or exceed the requirements of these policies. This requires that local leadership understand this policy thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments about local circumstances. Any such additions or revisions must be submitted in writing for the approval of the Bishop and Diocesan Chancellor. No provisions may be omitted from a local policy. **If a local entity has not adopted its own version of this policy, the terms of this policy shall apply to that entity.**

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 Canon to the Ordinary or other person designated by the Diocesan Office 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 Canon to the Ordinary or other person designated by the Diocesan Office for consultation and resources if assistance is needed.

III. DEFINITIONS

NOTE: These definitions reflect current understanding of terms describing gender identity and sexuality, which are evolving even as the model policies are being written.

Adult: In Tennessee anyone who is 18 years old or older is considered to be an adult. For the portions of this policy pertaining to the protection of vulnerable adults, a vulnerable adult is 18 years old or older regardless of whether they are in high school. For the portions of this policy pertaining to protection of children and youth, an adult is anyone who is 18 years or older who has not completed, and is still attempting to complete, high school.¹

Adult Protective Services (APS): A social services program provided by the State of Tennessee with local county offices that serve vulnerable adults and their families who are in need of assistance. APS receives and investigates reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults.

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.¹

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

Department of Children's Services (DCS): A social services program provided by the State of Tennessee with local county offices that serve children and their families who are in need of assistance. DCS receives and investigates reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Driver Services (TDS/DMV): The Tennessee Driver Services Division performs the functions of the Department of Motor Vehicles in any other states.

Diocese: The Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee.

Faith Community: Faith Community has the meaning set forth in the Canons of the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee. All parishes and missions of the Diocese are Faith Communities.

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

¹ Ages established in accordance with generally accepted definitions in the United States. These ages may vary across communities.

("genderqueer"). These terms are evolving as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Intake Officer: The person(s) designated by the Bishop 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 covered under this policy or other behavior for which a member of the clergy may be held accountable under Title IV.

Leader: A person, adult or youth, who, for the benefit of another, engages in ministry, but does not have responsibility for oversight of others who are engaged in that same ministry. Examples include Sunday school teachers, camp counselors, program team, Eucharistic Visitors, and members of pastoral care teams.

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. These terms are evolving as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Mandated Reporters: Tennessee has a very broad mandatory reporting law. Any person (not just an adult) who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition shall report to the Department of Children's Services or local law enforcement such harm immediately if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect or that, on basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect. Because children can be considered to be mandatory reporters the Diocese regularly works to discern, develop and update age-appropriate best practices for training children and youth to make reports.

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

Organizations: All institutions for which the Diocese or Faith Communities have legal or fiduciary responsibility (examples: Diocesan departments, commissions, conference & retreat centers, adult day care centers, retirement communities, religious orders, Faith Communities, 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 Faith Communities (examples include: General Convention, Diocesan Convention, 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.

Residential Facility: Any institutional or group home setting where a vulnerable adult resides on a permanent or temporary basis such as a nursing home, rehabilitation center, assisted living facility, treatment center, or memory care facility.

Responsible Person: The person designated as being accountable for compliance with this policy for an event or program.

Sacramental Use: Consecrated or unconsecrated wine used in the setting of Eucharist.

Supervisor: A person who has oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or Leaders in a ministry program.

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 term is evolving 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.

Vulnerable Adult (in Tennessee any person age 18 or older is an “adult”):

- Any adult at or older than the age designated as an elder by applicable state law (in Tennessee an “elder” is anyone age 65 or older);
- Any adult who is infirm or diminished in capacity due to age, illness, or disability;
- Any adult who is ministered to in their home (by Eucharistic Visitors, Pastoral Care Visitors, Stephen Ministers, or others);
- Any adult who is wholly or partially dependent upon one or more other persons for emotional, psychological, or physical care or support, such dependency may be temporary as in the case of an accident, illness, or birth of a child; and
- Any adult who by virtue of a crisis, experiences vulnerability leading to dependency on another or lacks agency in a pastoral relationship as in the wake of death of a family member or job loss.

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 who is still working toward completion of high school.²

² Ages established in accordance with generally accepted definitions in the United States. These ages may vary across communities.

IV. APPLICATION AND SCREENING

The Diocese, its constituent Faith Communities, and other 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

- The Diocese of West Tennessee Background Check Policy shall govern all Public Records Checks required by this Safe Church Policy. Such checks must be completed before the employee or volunteer begins interacting with vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults);
- **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 Faith Communities and 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 Faith Community for at least six months before engaging in ministry with vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults), unless they are required to have public records checks and reference checks pursuant to the *Screening and Training Protocols* (Appendix A).

The Diocesan Office, Faith Communities, and other organizations in the Diocese must keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the Diocese, Faith Community’s, or organization’s office. This includes a signature by each applicant verifying receipt of a copy of this policy (whether a paper or electronic copy), including any local procedures or variations.

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, all Supervisors and those with oversight responsibilities for ministry programs and/or other adults who engage in ministry with vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) shall have Specialized Training that is tailored to their role and ministry function.

Depending on role and responsibility, Specialized Training should include:

- Prevention, identification, and response to all forms of abuse and neglect, including financial exploitation;
- Mandated and voluntary reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable with vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults)
- Vulnerability within the pastoral relationship;
- An introduction to gender non-binary;
- The needs of LGBTQ+ individuals who often struggle to find care or residential facilities adequately equipped to meet their needs;
- The ways that vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) can engage in self-advocacy;
- The needs of differently-abled persons; and
- A discussion of harassment, including prevention and response.

Certification of training shall be renewed every three years.

The Diocese, its Faith Communities, and other organizations with responsibility for programs with services or ministries with vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) shall keep records sufficient to evidence compliance with this policy.

VI. MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS

A Responsible Person shall monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, children, and youth to ensure appropriate behavior and healthy boundaries.

All people who minister to vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) 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.

The Diocesan Office, Faith Communities, and organizations shall ensure that all people who minister to vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) receive prior training as to the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry.

The Diocesan Office, Faith Communities, and organizations shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons with their contact information approved to minister vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) . This list shall be kept in the organization's office or other place where records are kept.

It is best practice for those ministering to vulnerable adults to document their visits, including time, place, and any observations or concerns. Such documentation is reviewed by the Supervisor. Confidentiality among clergy and lay ministers is required and all documentation is kept confidential. This documentation promotes continuity of care and transparency in ministry.

All new activities that include pastoral relationships and/or ministry to vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) shall have a Responsible Person to monitor and supervise all events to foster appropriate behavior and healthy boundaries.

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. 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, senior warden, or Responsible Person as soon as possible.

Only one adult may be sufficient in well-monitored, visually accessible program space on the Faith Community's grounds, such as a Sunday School classroom, provided that another adult can maintain visual contact with the adult program leader. In most circumstances this may be accomplished by designating an individual to conduct frequent random checks of classrooms and unlocked spaces throughout the building(s) or similar checks appropriate for the setting. These exceptional circumstances must be specifically described in a written document and approved by the governing body of the Faith Community. See also sections on ***Overnight Programs*** (Section VI:K) and ***Transportation*** (Section VI:L).

While not required, it is best practice for those ministering to vulnerable adults, or in the homes of others, to do so with another trained adult minister present. Those engaged in such ministries should minister in pairs. If circumstances result in a minister being unexpectedly alone with a vulnerable adult, that minister shall report this to the Supervisor, clergy, senior warden, or Responsible Person as soon as possible.

B. Creating Safe Spaces for Ministry

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 Faith Community or organization's buildings or other worship spaces.
- **Computers and electronic devices.** Children and youth shall have adequate supervision when using electronic devices belonging to the Diocese, Faith Communities, and other organizations. Devices shall have adequate password protection. Each user shall have their own account and password. See *Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications* (Appendix B).
- **Persons with keys and access to locked spaces.** *Anyone with keys or electronic access* to Faith Community buildings or other space where children or youth regularly meet 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. Given the vast differences in facilities, each Diocesan ministry, Faith Community, and other organization should determine how best to meet this standard.

To create a safe space for ministry with vulnerable adults, it is necessary to anticipate and avoid circumstances that could result in exposure of vulnerable adults to undue influence or exploitation. On-site and off-site settings for ministry with vulnerable adults and pastoral relationships and conversations should:

- Be in places where casual monitoring by others is convenient; and
- Convey safety and comfort.

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 if the state's mandatory reporting law requires that the person receiving the disclosure make a report.

Impulsive, secluded or secretive activity, online or in person with children or youth, may foster a high-risk situation, and is therefore to be avoided. See *Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications* (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 about poverty, need, and hunger, such as an intentional fasting program. In these cases the deprivation or other occurrence must be specifically described in writing and participants must agree to participate in writing. In the case of minors, 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 the action or deprivation set forth in the written disclosure. Participants who wish to withdraw or who are unable to complete the program must have their basic needs met immediately.

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 persons by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary persons 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 person's ability to keep their transgender 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).

In programs with children and youth, adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than the children or youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided. See section on *Overnight Programs* (Section VI:K).

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 written approval.
- Report suspected violations immediately. See *Suspected Violations of this Policy* (Section VII:C).

G. Behavioral Standards for Ministry with Vulnerable Populations

Those who work with vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships in all settings.

Interactions with children and youth should meet all requirements outlined above, and adults should be discouraged from initiating a private relationship with any unrelated child or youth involved in the ministry or event.

To this end, lay and ordained ministers working with vulnerable adults shall:

- Take care not to unduly influence a person to whom they minister;
- Accept only token gifts from those to whom they minister. Ministers (lay or clergy) given gifts shall report those gifts in writing to their Supervisor, clergy, senior warden, or Responsible Person;
- Decline to accept loans of any kind from those to whom they minister; and
- Inform the Supervisor, clergy, senior warden, or Responsible Person of anything that causes concern for the safety or wellbeing of those to whom they minister.

Ordained ministers working with vulnerable adults shall:

- Decline to agree to be named as a beneficiary or to act as an administrator or executor in a will of anyone to whom they minister; and
- Decline to serve as a guardian for a child to whom the ordained minister serves as a minister or to whose family the ordained minister serves as a minister; and

- Decline to serve as a guardian, conservator or trustee or hold a power of attorney for a vulnerable adult.

A lay minister should consult with the lay minister's rector or priest-in-charge, or, if none, the Bishop, before agreeing to

- be named as a beneficiary or act as an administrator or executor in a will to anyone to whom they minister;
- serve as a guardian for a child to whom a lay minister serves as a minister or to whose family the lay minister serves as a minister; or
- serve as a guardian, conservator or trustee, or hold a power of attorney for a vulnerable adult.

DOs

Those who minister with vulnerable populations 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 vulnerable persons (children, youth, vulnerable adults) , 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 during prayer or while walking with small children;
 - handshakes;
 - 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 vulnerable persons (children, youth, or vulnerable adults) 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 event or when they are responsible for vulnerable populations (children, youth, or vulnerable adults) 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 vulnerable populations (children, youth, or vulnerable adults) at an event;
- Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior; and
- Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any vulnerable person (child, youth, or vulnerable adult).

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 are a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional development of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. They also present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site. In the event a school has a policy for off-site programs, trips, and events, the school shall follow its policy, but is encouraged to incorporate any of the following provisions that may be applicable to the extent that the school's policy does not cover the concerns addressed.

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

Because of the unique risks that cannot always be anticipated, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below.

1. Prior Approvals

- Prior approval by the governing body (such as a vestry or mission council) and the member of the clergy in charge is required, and that approval shall be reflected in the minutes of the governing body. Diocesan sponsored programs, trips, or events shall receive prior written Diocesan approval.
- Written parental approval is required prior to viewing any movie with children or youth, whether off-site 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 Forms

- All participants shall complete and sign a registration form and a waiver and release form before participating in any programs. Confidentiality must be

preserved with respect to medical and other sensitive information in the forms. Such forms can encompass a program year.

- There must be a signature on all release and waiver forms for minors. For children, youth, and those adults unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency, that person's parent/guardian is required. Digital/electronic signatures are acceptable.
- Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site or online. The forms must be saved with "permanent" employee files. Legal counsel should be consulted before destroying these forms.
- Permission slips (paper or electronic) shall be provided for each off-site event and shall be signed by the parent/guardian of each child, youth, and adult unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency.
- Prior permission for an adult to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required from the adult or a guardian if the adult is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency.
- Prior permission for a minor to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required from a parent/guardian.

3. First Aid and Medications

- Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with vulnerable populations (children, youth, or vulnerable adults).
- 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 any vulnerable person (child, youth, or vulnerable adult) shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents/guardians 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 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 you have new leaders-in-training, 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 adequate insurance in case of emergency. For more information, contact your insurance broker.

I. Visits to Private Residences

The safety of all persons and healthy boundaries are essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a private home.

- Avoid situations that might compromise privacy; common examples include:
 - Visiting behind closed bedroom doors;
 - Sitting on the bed of the person being visited; or
 - Visiting a person while they are not fully clothed.
- The best practice is to visit in teams of two or more. If it is not possible for another adult minister to be present, a member of the vulnerable adult's household should be present. If neither is possible, documentation of the time, duration of visit, general matters discussed, and any pastoral concerns shall be provided to the Supervisor as soon as possible after the visit.

J. Visits to Residential Facilities

The safety of all persons and healthy boundaries are also essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a Residential Facility. Best practices include:

- Facility staff should be informed of the visitor's presence;

- If a visit takes place out of sight of Residential Facility staff, they should be notified in advance and informed when such meeting is concluded;
- The door to a resident's private room must remain open during visits;
- Visitors should be mindful that LGBTQ+ residents may not be safe to express their sexual identity or orientation, as staff members of the Residential Facility may not yet have been trained; and
- In the event of uncertainty about application of this policy, the visitor is encouraged to contact their Supervisor with the relevant queries.

K. Overnight Programs

In overnight programming, particular attention will be given to historically excluded or unrecognized people, such as LGBTQ+ and differently-abled 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 the Diocese, Faith Communities and other organizations to consider numerous factors, including, but not limited to: age, sex, gender identity and expression, and privacy. Adults should have separate showers or separate times for showers.
- 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.
 - 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 hideabeds, 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.

L. Transportation

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

- For events that originate and/or terminate at the Diocesan, Faith Community, or organization's facility, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance, a current driver's license, a completed volunteer driver information form, and have a satisfactory current TDS/DMV records check.
- All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage. Drivers should not use cell phones (talking or texting) while driving.
- 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.
- A list of those approved to provide transportation to vulnerable adults shall be maintained in the office of the organization.
- Regarding transportation of vulnerable adults: Anyone being transported must consent to such transportation beforehand. If a person is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency, then prior approval by that person's guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member is required.

M. 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.

N. 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 communities of faith 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, Faith Community, 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

- Short-term trip or supplemental insurance, available through most Faith Community and organization's policies as an added rider, must be secured at least one month prior to travel.
- 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.
- Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.

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. Each traveler should carry proof of vaccination.
- 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 for youth with links to U.S. and global organizations can be found in The Episcopal Church's ***Youth in Mission Manual***.

VII. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

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

Any person who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place, is required to contact the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. Under Tennessee law any person of any age is considered to be a mandatory reporter.

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, Faith Community, or other organization, should immediately inform one or more of the following:

- The Bishop or Canon to the Ordinary if the abuse, neglect, or exploitation occurred on the property of or at any event of or sponsored by any Faith Community, camp, retreat center, institution, school, organization, or other ministry of the Diocese;
- Member of the clergy in charge or the senior warden in the case of a Faith Community;
- The director, head, or other governing officer in the case of other organizations; and/or
- The Intake Officer if a member of the clergy is suspected of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation.

B. Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult

Anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult has taken place is strongly encouraged, and all mandated reporters are required, to contact Tennessee Adult Protective Services.

In addition, anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult has taken place within a facility or program of the Diocese, Faith Community, or other organization, should immediately inform one or more of the following:

- The Bishop or Canon to the Ordinary if the abuse, neglect, or exploitation occurred on the property of or at any event of or sponsored by any Faith Community, camp, retreat center, institution, school, organization, or other ministry of the Diocese;
- Member of the clergy in charge or the senior warden in the case of a Faith Community;
- The director, head, or other governing officer in the case of other organizations; and/or

- The Intake Officer if a member of the clergy is suspected of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation.

C. Suspected Violations of this Safe Church Policy

Anyone who suspects a violation of any of the provisions of the Safe Church Policy (including the Anti-Harassment Policy and other provisions set forth on the Appendices to this Policy shall immediately report the violation to the Responsible Person, member of the clergy in charge, and senior warden (or similar officers or personnel at schools or other institutions or organizations).

Clergy in charge (or if there is no member of the clergy in charge of the Faith Community, the senior warden) 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 Faith Community. In the event that the senior warden or other lay person is responsible for providing pastoral care and/or disciplinary action, the senior warden or responsible lay person should promptly contact the Canon to the Ordinary for assistance.

Anyone who suspects a violation of the Safe Church Policy by a member of the clergy shall immediately report the violation to the Bishop or Canon to the Ordinary and 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.

D. Notification to the Diocesan Office

All Responsible Persons, whether clergy or lay, are encouraged to notify the Bishop and/or Canon to the Ordinary, and the Intake Officer (if the suspect is a member of the clergy), when there is suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth or if there is a suspected violation of this Policy, to help ensure that pastoral care is provided and provide any other assistance that may be appropriate.

D. Local Resources for Response

The Diocesan Office, Faith Communities, and affiliated organizations shall maintain 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 Faith Community;

- Wardens;
- Bishop and Canon to the Ordinary
- Intake Officer(s);
- Tennessee Department of Children's Services; and
- Tennessee Adult Protective Services.

E. Guidance on Making Reports

A brief summary of information on making reports of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth or of suspected violations of this Policy can be found in **Appendix C: Guidance on Making Reports.**

VIII. POLICY ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND AUDIT

A. Diocesan Adoption

The Diocese shall ensure that all programs and events of The Episcopal Church involving children and youth comply with the standards set out in this policy.

The Diocese shall also ensure that each Faith Community adopts a Safe Church policy complying with this model policy and the Safe Church model policies of The Episcopal Church by June 1, 2024. If the Faith Community has not adopted its own policy, the provisions of this model Safe Church Policy shall apply.

B. Policy Implementation and Audit

Each Faith Community and institution shall adopt a ***Safe Church Policy*** that is consistent with and/or exceeds the requirements set forth in this policy.

A Faith Community or institution may adopt site-specific variations from this policy, where permitted by their governing body and the Bishop, which shall be described in detail, including the circumstances under which those variations are to be permitted and their rationale. This approval shall be recorded in the minutes of the governing body.

The Bishop or ecclesiastical authority for the Diocese shall inform Faith Communities and other organizations within the Diocese of the contents of the Diocesan policy, the requirement that each Faith Community or organization adopt a policy in accordance with the Diocesan policy, and the vendor(s) approved by each diocese to conduct Public Records Checks.

The Diocese is required to conduct a ***Safe Church Self-Audit*** every three years to confirm compliance with Diocesan safe church policies.

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

- Existence of Diocesan policy that is consistent with and/or exceeds the requirements of The Episcopal Church's Policy, as provided for by the General Convention;
- Provision of accessible and appropriate training for all those who work with vulnerable populations (children, youth, and vulnerable adults) in accordance with ***Screening and Training Protocols*** (Appendix A). Such training shall include, at a minimum, topics identified in this model policy;
- Verification that each Faith Community and/or organization within the Diocese has adopted a policy that is consistent with and/or exceeds the Diocesan policy; and
- Verification that each Faith Community and/or organization has a process to ensure members access training and conduct public record checks.

C. Faith Community and Organization Adoption, Implementation, and Audit

Faith Communities and organizations must adopt a ***Safe Church Policy*** that is consistent with and/or exceeds the requirements in this policy.

Faith Communities and organizations may adopt site-specific variations from Diocesan policies, where permitted by vestries, mission councils, or other governing bodies, Bishop and Diocesan Chancellor, which shall be described in detail, including the circumstances under which those variations are to be permitted and their rationale. This approval shall be recorded in the minutes of the vestry, mission council, or other governing body.

The ***Safe Church Policy*** shall be posted or made available for review in an area where activities take place, and a copy of the full text of this policy shall be made available to all adults, guardians, and all paid and unpaid persons who minister to vulnerable populations (children, youth, or vulnerable adults). These policies shall include the names and phone numbers of the member of the clergy in charge, the senior warden, the Intake Officer(s), the Diocesan Safe Church Administrator, and a contact person in the Diocesan Office.

Regarding the Anti-Harassment Policy (see Appendix D) for workplaces, Faith Communities and organizations should consult with the anti-harassment “Best Practices Guide” in Appendix B of the Blue Book Report of the Task Force to Develop Model Sexual Harassment and Safe Church Training from The Episcopal Church’s 80th General Convention 2022. The Blue Book Report is posted on the website of the Diocese of Tennessee along with a copy of this Safe Church Policy and can also be found on the General Convention website at <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/30014> or the Archives of The Episcopal Church at chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.episcopalarchives.org/e-archives/gc_reports/reports/2022/bb_2022-R050.pdf

Each Faith Community and organization is required to conduct a ***Safe Church Self-Audit*** annually to confirm compliance with safe church policies, and to report such audit to the Diocesan Office.

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.

Appendix A: Screening and Training Protocols

Screening and Training Chart	Ministry Function	Public Records	App/Inter/Ref	Universal Training	Leader	Supervisor
Staff & Contracted Ministers (not covered below)	Church Employees	X	X	X		X
	Diocesan contractors (1099)	Depends		X	X	
	Clergy	X	X	X		X
	Church contractors (1099)	Depends		X		
	Diocesan Employees	X	X	X		X
	Diocesan Staff - unpaid	X	X	X		X
Program Supervisors						
	Child/Youth Choir Director	X	X	X		X
	Choir Director	X	X	X		X
	Commissioned Ministry Teams	X	X	X		X
	Director of Religious Education	X	X	X		X
	Camp Director	X	X	X		X
	Youth Minister	X	X	X		X
Program Participants (non-supervisory)						
	Acolyte Mentor	X		X	X	
	Choir parents			X		
	Church School Teacher	X		X	X	
	Counselor in Training	X- 18 and over	X	X	X	
	Nursery Worker - unpaid	X		X	X	
	Parish Nurse	X	X	X		X
	Teenage assistants			X	X	
	Musicians who work with youth	X	X	X		X
*Off-site	Camp Counselor	X	X	X		X
	Confirmation mentors	X	X	X	X	
	Lay Chaplains	X	X	X		X
	Pastoral Care Teams	X	X	X	X	
*Overnight	Youth Group Leaders	X	X	X		X
Drivers						
	Drivers	DMV		X		
Governance						
	Church Elected			X	X	
	Treasurer	Criminal & Credit		X	X	
	Vestry			X	X	
	Wardens	Criminal & Credit		X		X
Key Access						
	Altar Guild	Recommended		X		
	Building Hosts	Recommended		X		
Home Visitors						
	Eucharistic Visitors	X	X	X	X	
	Home Visitors	X	X	X	X	
	Stephen Ministers	X	X	X	X	
	Church Staff- unpaid	X	X	X		X

*Off-site: Any location other than the sponsoring Episcopal church, institution, facility, or campus.

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

Appendix B: Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications

Social media shapes the lives of young people and has the potential to empower ministry. Behavior in the digital sphere is never private. 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 social media use in the midst of rapidly evolving technology. The following recommended practices and guidelines are designed to be a flexible template for developing policies and covenants governing the safe use of social media and digital communication in ministry settings.

General Information about Digital Communications

- 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.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent; that is, occurring in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.
- 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. Check your local applicable laws.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Churches and Organizations:

- Establish a policy that outlines professional and institutional standards for profiles and interactions on social networking sites and platforms.
- Establish a policy of transparency regarding social media accounts. The best practice is to have the diocese, congregation, or organization create and “own” the social media accounts representing the diocese, congregation, or organization respectively and have multiple administrators and/or supervisors with access. If personal accounts are used, a system of monitoring should be established.
- Establish a policy regarding the identification or “tagging” of individuals in online photos or videos. For example, on Facebook, “tagging” someone in a

photo or video creates a hyperlink to that person's profile page that can be clicked by anyone. The best practice is for the diocese, congregation, or organization not to identify or "tag" individuals. The "tagging" of children and youth should be prohibited. When written permission is provided by a parent/guardian, the captioning of photos or videos of minors may be permitted. The caption should not include the minor's full name, nor should it create a clickable link to someone's personal profile. A policy of whether or not an individual can "self-tag" in a diocese, congregation, or organization's online photo or video should also be established.

- The diocese, congregation, or organization does not have a responsibility to review or monitor the personal pages or groups that are not sponsored by that diocese, congregation, or organization, except as described in #2 above. The preceding statement should be included in the diocese, congregation, or organization's Social Media Policy.
- Email can be a good method of communication, and it also has the opportunity to be misunderstood. Having a clear understanding and procedure for responding to digital communication that raises concern is prudent for all. Best practices can include not responding immediately and sharing the communication with a supervisor before responding. Phone and face-to-face meetings are preferred when responding to emotionally driven communications or pastoral emergencies.
- When using photos and videos for ministry purposes, obtain a media release for each person and only post images that respect the dignity of every person depicted.
- The Diocese and its ministries, congregations, or organizations must inform participants when they are being videoed because church buildings are not considered public space. Signs should be posted that indicate a service or activity will be broadcast when worship services or activities are streamed or distributed on the web or via other broadcast media.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Vulnerable Populations:

- Prudent judgement should be used in the time of day a person is contacted through social media. Under normal circumstances, refrain from contact or exchanging texts, chats, or emails before 8:00 am or after 10:00 pm, unless it's an emergency.
- Privacy settings and personal boundaries should be implemented.
 - Create and use profiles on social networking sites that meet professional and institutional standards.
 - Apply privacy settings that are consistent with all individuals from that group, across all social networking sites and platforms. Avoid playing favorites or the appearance of playing favorites.

- Establish a regular ongoing and consistent system of review that focuses on settings, accessible content, photos, and videos to ensure compliance with professional and institutional standards.
- When possible, send communication (1) to entire groups, (2) on an individual's "wall," or (3) in public areas, rather than in private messages. This includes photos, images and videos.
- Disclose **ongoing** digital pastoral communications (ie: e-mails, Facebook messages, texting, etc.) with a supervisor to determine when a referral to a professional provider or resource is needed.
- Create covenants to govern digital groups, which include:
 - Appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, illegal activities, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior;
 - Who may join and/or view group activity, when participants should leave the group and when/if the group will be disbanded;
 - Description of content that can be posted or published on the site or page;
 - A prohibition of "tagging" photos and videos of children and youth. However, the captioning of photos and videos is permissible with written permission from a parent or guardian;
 - Notification that mandatory reporting laws will be followed; and
 - Consequences for breaking the covenant.
- Delete inappropriate material posted in digital groups, address the behavior and report it, if necessary, in accordance with legal and institutional requirements.
- In video calls, follow the same criteria used in telephone calls. In addition, prudent judgement regarding attire and surroundings should be observed.
- Comply with the following best practices regarding "groups" on social networking sites:
 - Remove any content that shows or describes inappropriate behavior outside the bounds of the established behavioral covenant;
 - Observe mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Recommended Guidelines Specific to Children and Youth:

- Do not submit connection requests (such as friend requests on Facebook or "Add Me" on Snapchat) to children or youth for personal interactions. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between

youth and adults. Youth may ask to be “friends,” and adults should discern the nature of contact appropriate for healthy ministry.

- Inform parents of children and youth of social networking sites and platforms used within the ministry.
- When sending emails to a child or youth that contain personal or private information regarding that child or youth, a copy should be sent to the parents or guardians as well. Examples of these types of emails include: payment due information, specific medical requests or questions, etc. Mass emails sent to an entire group are not required to be copied to parents or guardians.
- Disclose **ongoing** digital pastoral communications (ie: e-mails, Facebook messages, texting, etc) with children and youth to a parent and/or a supervisor to determine when a referral to a professional provider or resource is needed.
- Prohibit “tagging” photos and videos of children and youth. However, the captioning of photos and videos is permissible with written permission from a parent or guardian;
- For “groups” on social networking sites with youth:
 - Have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators for groups that are designed for youth;
 - Use closed groups, but not “hidden” or “secret” groups, for youth;
 - Have only youth administrators invite other youth to join the online group, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite them to join;
 - Open social networking groups for youth to parents of current members;
 - Remove adult leaders of youth groups and youth who are no longer members, due to departure, removal from position, or are ineligible because they “aged-out” of a program from social networking sites, list serves, etc.;
 - Observe mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Recommended Guidelines Specific to Vulnerable Adults:

- Prudent judgement should be used in the time of day a vulnerable adult is contacted through social media. Under normal circumstances, refrain from contact or exchanging texts, chats, or emails before 8:00 am or after 10:00 pm, unless it’s an emergency.
- Disclose **ongoing** digital pastoral communications (ie: e-mails, Facebook messages, texting, etc) with a vulnerable adult to a supervisor to determine when a referral to a professional provider or resource is needed.
- In covenants to govern digital groups include

- Who may join and/or view group activity, when participants should leave the group, and when/if the group will be disbanded, and
- Appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, illegal activities, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior.
- In video calls, follow the same criteria used in telephone calls. In addition, prudent judgement regarding attire and surroundings should be observed.
- Comply with the following best practices regarding “groups” on social networking sites:
 - Discourage “tagging” photos and videos of vulnerable adults. However, the captioning of photos and videos is permissible with appropriate written permission as described above;
 - Have at least two unrelated administrators;
 - Use closed groups, but not “hidden” or “secret” groups, for vulnerable adults;
 - Remove any content that shows or describes inappropriate behavior outside the bounds of the established behavioral covenant; and
 - Observe mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Appendix C: Guidance on Making Reports

I. Suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child or youth

A. Mandated Reporters under Tennessee law: Any person (including a child) who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition shall report such harm immediately if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect or that, on basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect.

You must report suspected physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.

If a child or youth is in a situation in which a report needs to be made, an adult should help the child or youth make the report.

B. How to Report

1. If you witness someone who appears to be abusing or otherwise harming a child, or see wounds or suffering, call **911** immediately.
2. Otherwise call the **Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline** at **877-237-0004**. You will be asked to provide the following information. You should make the report even if you do not know all the information.
 - Child(ren) names, ages, address, phone numbers, race, and school/daycare information
 - Parent(s), Legal Guardian(s), or caretaker(s) information
 - Other household members information
 - Nature of the harm or specific incident(s) that precipitated the report
 - Specific allegation(s), date(s) and descriptions(s) of the injuries or dangers
 - Identities of alleged perpetrator(s) and their relationship(s) to the victim
 - Witnesses to the incident(s) and how to reach those witnesses
 - Details of any physical evidence available
 - Perpetrator's current access to the child
 - Present condition of the child (alone, in need of medical attention, etc.)
 - The location of the child and directions to that location
 - Any statements from the child
 - Parent's or perpetrator's explanation of the alleged child victim's condition or the incident
 - Parent's current emotional, physical or mental state, especially feelings about the child and reactions to the report
 - How the reporter came to know the information and the reporter's thoughts about the likelihood of further harm to the child

3. You should also contact the rector or the clergy in charge of any Faith Communities involved (e.g., attended by the suspected abuser, by the victim, or by members of the immediate family of the victim or suspected abuser). If the Faith Community does not have a member of the clergy in charge, the Senior Warden should be contacted. If the Faith Community or other institution does not have a member of the clergy, information regarding the suspected abuser (especially if the suspected abuser is member of an Episcopal Church) should be reported to the Canon to the Ordinary.

4. If the suspected abuser is a member of the clergy, also contact the Intake Officer of the Diocese by sending an email to intakeofficerwtn@gmail.com. If you do not have the ability to send an email, or if you do not receive a response from the Intake Officer within 24 hours, please contact the Canon to the Ordinary.

5. Anyone making a report to 911 or the Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline is encouraged to notify the Canon to the Ordinary when there is suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth to help ensure that pastoral care is provided and provide any other assistance that may be appropriate.

II. Suspected Violation of this Policy

Any suspected violation of this policy should be reported to the member of the clergy in charge of the Faith Community (or Senior Warden if there is no member of the clergy) or the person supervising the ministry or event associated with the violation. The Canon to the Ordinary should also be contacted.

Appendix D: Anti-Harassment Policy

It is the policy of the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee and its constituent Faith Communities and agencies to provide and maintain our environments free from harassment of any kind as part of our Baptismal commitment to respect the dignity of every human being. Additionally, it is important that we fully comply with all applicable laws in creating healthy working environments. Harassment undermines the integrity of our relationships and negatively impacts the morale and productivity of all who participate in the life of the Church.

It is prohibited for any employee, supervisor, volunteer, member, visitor, or program participant (whether clergy or lay) to harass another employee, supervisor, volunteer, member, visitor, or program participant (whether clergy or lay) during working or non-working hours, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, age, weight, height, disability, military status, family status, or marital status.

Harassing Conduct

Harassment is unwelcome conduct toward an individual on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, age, weight, height, disability, military status, family status, marital status, or any legally protected status, any time the conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Examples of harassment that may violate this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Oral, written, or electronic communications that contain slurs, negative stereotyping, offensive jokes, insults, or threats. This includes comments or jokes that are dismissive of human dignity or targeted at individuals or groups based on attributes listed above.
- Nonverbal conduct, such as leering and giving inappropriate gifts.
- Physical conduct, such as assault or unwanted touching.
- Visual images, such as derogatory or offensive pictures, cartoons, drawings or gestures. Such prohibited images include those in hard copy or electronic form.
- Expressed or implied demands for favors in exchange for some benefit (e.g., a promotion, a leadership role) or to avoid some detriment (e.g., termination, removed financial support for a project)

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors, unwelcome physical contact of a sexual nature, or unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment may be further defined under the laws of the State of Tennessee.

Sexual harassment includes conduct directed by a person at another person of the same or another gender. Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature includes, but is not limited to, the deliberate, repeated making of unsolicited gestures or comments of a sexual nature; the deliberate, repeated display of offensive sexually graphic materials; or deliberate verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, whether or not repeated, that is sufficiently severe to interfere substantially within a ministry context and/or an employee's work performance or to create an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Behavior that Respects Dignity and Difference

The goal of the Diocese is to have an environment where all treat each other respectfully. Any behavior that does not respect a person's dignity, even if it does not rise to the level of "harassment," interferes with that goal. Church leaders at all levels and in all contexts are encouraged, as part of setting and maintaining an appropriate tone, to respond to behavior that falls short of this goal, even where no one has complained or indicated they have been offended.

Reporting a Violation

Do not assume that your supervisor, clergyperson, or ministry leader is aware of the problem. You need to bring your complaints and concerns to the attention of the person designated to receive responses so that the complaints can be addressed and resolved. When concerns and complaints arise, please document them. If you wish to report your concerns, bring them to the designated response person, if your ministry context has one, or else to your immediate supervisor or ministry leader. If your immediate supervisor or ministry leader is the harasser, you should bring your concerns to their supervisor if they have one, or to another leader in the Faith Community. If the harasser is a member of the clergy, the Intake Officer for the Diocese should be contacted.

Investigation and Response

When you report a complaint of harassment or inappropriate behavior, your complaint will be investigated. Where there has been a violation of policy, appropriate action will be taken to resolve problems and avoid future violations. In appropriate cases, disciplinary action (including potential termination of employment or leadership responsibilities) may be taken against those violating the Anti-Harassment Policy. You can expect to be informed periodically about the status of your complaint.

Leadership Responsibility

While building a culture of respect and appropriate behavior is work that belongs to the whole community, it is the responsibility of senior lay and clergy leadership to ensure an environment free of harassment and inappropriate behavior and that complaints are handled promptly and effectively. Leadership with personnel responsibilities must: inform their employees, clergy, supervisors, volunteers, and members about this policy (including posting this policy in an easily visible location or a place where it can be easily accessed); specify a person to hear complaints; promptly investigate allegations of harassment; take appropriate action (including disciplinary action); and take steps to prevent retaliation.

Retaliation Is Prohibited

This policy strictly prohibits any retaliation against any person who reports a concern about harassment or other inappropriate behavior or participates in an investigation of a violation of this policy. To help avoid retaliation, senior leadership shall make an earnest effort to facilitate repentance and repair within the affected community. Complaints of retaliation should be reported in the same manner as for complaints of harassment.