



CHRIST OUR HOPE
ANGLICAN CHURCH

VALPARAISO, INDIANA · ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF THE GREAT LAKES

Safe Church Policy

For the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

IN REVIEW · DATED N/A

PURPOSE

Jesus' instructions were: "let the little ones come to Me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)

In following the Lord's command, it is the purpose of the vestry, clergy, members, staff, and volunteers of Christ Our Hope Anglican Church, Valparaiso ("Christ Our Hope") to ensure that children, youth, persons with disabilities, and all members of the parish family are in a safe environment.

This policy is for the protection of minors as well as our adult congregation members, volunteers, and staff members. Christ Our Hope is required to hold clergy, staff members and volunteers ("workers") accountable for their actions when supervising, teaching, and leading children, youth, and vulnerable adults ("children"), and other members of the Christ Our Hope parish. All Christ Our Hope workers are responsible for ensuring that the workplace and interaction with parishioners is free from harassment and misconduct.

Where this policy refers to "children," its protections apply equally to vulnerable adults—persons 18 or older who may need care or protection because of disability, age, or illness.

OVERVIEW

Because we love children and desire to protect them, Christ Our Hope requires all clergy and staff, and all volunteers working with children to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

Safe Church Director. Christ Our Hope designates a Safe Church Director responsible for coordinating screening, training, recordkeeping, policy compliance, and the congregation's response to any report. *[Safe Church Director: TBD]*

STEP ONE: SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING

To equip workers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Christ Our Hope requires all workers to complete MinistrySafe's Sexual Abuse Awareness Training. This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: SCREENING PROCESS

Our screening process requires workers to:

- complete an Employment Application (staff and clergy only)
- complete the Application to Work with Children
- complete a face-to-face interview
- provide references to be checked

STEP THREE: CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

All workers involved in children's or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. The check includes a criminal history check and a sex offender registry check; for anyone who drives minors or vulnerable adults, a DMV/driver's-license check is also required. A credit check is required for clergy, treasurers, bookkeepers, check-signers, and any worker with access to church accounts or cards. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required. Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve in any area providing services to children. In addition, certain other past criminal acts may preclude an applicant from serving children. This background check will be repeated every three years for lay workers. Clergy canonically resident or licensed in the ADGL are background-checked by the Diocese through Oxford Document Management (ODM) on a five-year cycle; satisfying the diocesan check satisfies this requirement for clergy.

STEP FOUR: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Each worker is required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

TRAINING

All clergy, staff, and volunteers who will be working with children will be required to:

- Review and consent to this policy by signing.
- Complete Ministry Safe training and pass the evaluation. Upon completion of the video training, the individual will receive a certificate of completion and will be responsible to provide a copy of the certificate to the Rector/Priest-in-charge (“Rector”) or their designee.
- Complete in-person Safe Church Policy training led by the Safe Church Director, renewed every two years, and certify in writing that they have read this policy.
- If leading overnight events, trips, or camps, complete MinistrySafe Camp Leadership Training before serving, renewed every two years.

SCREENING PROCESS

1. All volunteers who work with children, and all clergy and paid staff members without exception are required to complete an “Application to Work with Children” including references, and must pass a criminal background check. For clergy who have been licensed to serve in the Anglican Diocese of the Great Lakes, passing the diocesan required background check satisfies the requirements of this policy.
 1. This application (and the corresponding background check) must be repeated every three years for lay workers; clergy follow the diocesan five-year ODM cycle.
 2. Any prospective staff member or volunteer who is found to have prior occurrences of sexual misconduct or child abuse will not be allowed to serve in an area where he or she would have contact with minors or vulnerable adults.
 3. Any person who may pose a threat to children, youth, vulnerable adults, staff members, or church parishioners will be prohibited from working in any ministry where their presence could be considered a risk.
 4. The “Application to Work with Children” requests permission to obtain personal and confidential information. All personal information, applications, criminal background check results, reference checks, or the refusal of any person to participate in these procedures will be kept in confidence.

2. No worker will be approved to work with minors until:
 1. Six months of regular attendance at Christ Our Hope has been observed (newly hired clergy are exempt from this requirement).
 2. An Employment Application or an “Application to Work with Children” has been completed and reviewed.
 3. A Criminal Background check has been returned with satisfactory results.
 4. At least two references have been contacted and positive responses received.
 5. The staff member or Volunteer has satisfactorily completed Ministry Safe training. (Training should be repeated every two years).
 6. The staff member or volunteer has been interviewed by the Rector or their designee.

DISQUALIFICATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF MEMBERS

The following automatically disqualify an applicant from working with children or vulnerable adults: any history of perpetrating sexual abuse, any history of a violent crime, or any history of a sexual crime or misconduct. Beyond these automatic bars, Christ Our Hope reserves the right to disqualify any prospective staff member or volunteer as a result of any adverse findings from a criminal background check or any other source, or for any reason. Results from all background checks will be reviewed by the Rector or their designee(s). Any information obtained through the background checks will be kept in confidence.

SAFETY POLICIES

WORKING WITH CHILDREN

1. **Two Adult Rule** — No adult shall be left alone with a child or children except in the case of an emergency. Two unrelated adults are required for all activities involving the non-parental supervision of children at all church events. A youth volunteer who has been cleared to work with children may assist but may not be counted as one of the two required adults.

2. **Restroom Use** — Workers are not to assist children in the restroom, and adults should not ever be alone in a restroom with a child that is not their own.
 1. If a child needs assistance in the restroom, it should be provided by the parent or guardian.
 2. Multiple children should not be left unsupervised in a restroom. If it is necessary to allow multiple children in the restroom, a staff member or volunteer should stand at the door to provide accountability.
3. **Discipline** — All workers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behavior by children.
4. **No Private Electronic Communications** — Any individual emails, texts, or other electronic communications between a child and a worker are prohibited unless the parent or guardian of the child is copied and included in all communications.
5. No workers are to give individual gifts to any child without the prior permission of the parent or guardian.
6. There must be a window from hallways or public interior spaces into all rooms where minors are meeting. If there is not an interior window into the room or in the door, the door must remain open.
7. Children will only be released to approved parents or guardians. If a child is to be released to a non-custodial parent or guardian, written permission is required, and identification will be required before the child is released.
8. **Electronic Devices** — While many children and youth have personal cell phones or other personal electronics, use of personal electronic devices is a hindrance to the discipleship and relational purposes of our gathering together. Both workers and children should refrain from all but cursory use of personal devices when meeting together. Additionally, workers should not display videos or web pages on personal devices for children to view unless it is necessary to support the discipleship purpose of the meeting and they have determined beforehand that no advertisements or other potentially problematic material might be displayed alongside the desired content. For any extended events (e.g. retreats), children's phones should be stored in a central location and not allowed for personal use in any setting where there might be opportunity for groups to access the internet or video content together, especially during sleep times.

OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

1. Any off-site activities (i.e., not occurring at public worship gatherings of the Church) involving minors require the written permission of a parent or guardian, with medical information.
2. If there are any changes to the time or place of the event, all parents and guardians must be contacted before leaving the current site.
3. Only adults ages 21 and over who possess a valid driver's license and have completed all the requirements to work with children may transport children to a church sponsored event. Seatbelt use is required, and cell phone use while driving is prohibited.
4. When transporting children is necessary, it may not be possible to adhere strictly to the "Two Adult Rule." The following guidelines must be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:
 - No worker shall be alone in a car with a child — each adult must transport two or more children.
 - Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place are not allowed.
 - Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.

NURSERY

1. Only approved nursery workers will be allowed in the nursery, except for parents assisting with their children.
2. Workers will not change diapers. If a diaper change is needed, the parents will be alerted and asked to come and change the diaper.

COUNSELING

1. Any pastoral counseling of a child requires parental or guardian permission. Depending on the age of the child and the pastoral need, it may be desirable to conduct a one-on-one pastoral conversation. In this case, the door must remain open during the counseling, and at least one other adult must be on the premises for the duration. Children must be explicitly instructed that they are allowed to share any part of the conversation with their parents.

2. The Anglican Diocese of the Great Lakes requires that members of the clergy and other pastoral care givers refer an individual to professional counseling after meeting for six sessions. Clergy may, however, continue to provide ongoing pastoral care, prayer ministry and spiritual direction. Exceptions must be approved by the Bishop in writing. Fees or donations for pastoral care are prohibited.

KNOWN OFFENDERS

1. If a known or registered sexual offender participates in worship or other ministry related activities, a designated mentor, sponsor, or chaperone (“chaperone”) will be assigned and responsible for monitoring the offender’s activities while on the premises or while participating in a ministry sponsored activity.
2. The known offender will not be permitted to attend any events at Christ Our Hope without their chaperone present, and regardless of their chaperone’s presence, no known offender will be permitted to work with children.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

If any unacceptable behaviors are observed, they are to be immediately reported to the Church’s Rector or the most senior staff or volunteer available who is not directly involved in the allegation once the safety of everyone has been assured. Examples of unacceptable behavior include the following:

- Any “grooming behaviors” toward children including but not limited to: encouragement of secrecy, encouragement of rule-breaking, individualized preferential treatment including gift-giving, seeking or conducting private conversations, or inappropriate or unwelcome physical contact.
- Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity of any kind involving a child.
- Sexual advances or innuendos.
- Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to an adult or child.
- Physical neglect of a child, including failure to provide adequate supervision during an activity.
- Any mental, verbal, or emotional abuse, or bullying directed at any individual or group that is caused, encouraged, or overlooked by a worker.
- The possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of Christ Our Hope whether on or off the property.
- The presence, possession, consumption, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs during any activity involving minors on or off the church property.

POLICY VIOLATIONS

Christ Our Hope reserves the right to remove a volunteer or staff member from their position if unacceptable behavior is observed during any church program or activity or if any of the above policies are violated.

REPORTING

All instances or reports of abuse will be taken seriously, and appropriate action will be taken as stated below.

1. Any person having cause to suspect that someone has been a victim of mental, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse is required to immediately report their suspicion to the appropriate authorities. Indiana is a mandatory reporting state; by state law, anyone who suspects a child has been neglected or abused must make a report to the state. **We report all suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children to the Indiana Department of Child Services. Abuse Hotline: 1-800-800-5556. Suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable or endangered adult is reported to Indiana Adult Protective Services: 1-800-992-6978.**
2. Any suspected or alleged misconduct or abuse of a child or vulnerable adult must also be reported without delay—and in any case within 24 hours—to one or both ADGL Diocesan Reports Receivers: email ResponseTeam@adgl.us or call 330.615.2717. A report may instead be made to the Rector, who must then forward it to a Diocesan Reports Receiver without delay. (If the Rector is the alleged perpetrator, the Sr. Warden should be contacted and will make the report.)
3. All workers, if they are or have been accused of abuse or charged with a felony, are required to promptly report themselves to the Rector.
4. The Diocesan Reports Receivers handle notification of the ADGL Bishop and other ecclesiastical or civil authorities as required.

RESPONSE TO REPORTS

1. The worker will be suspended or placed on administrative leave while inquiries are made into the situation.
2. Every allegation of physical or sexual abuse will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. Every incident should follow the specific guidelines and requirements of the ACNA and ADGL Canons, particularly Title IV. Church disciplinary action of the accused, if guilty, ranges from removal of that person from serving in their former capacity to possible dismissal from the Congregation. The problem will not be remedied by relying on the promise of the staff member or volunteer to reform.

COMPLIANCE

Christ Our Hope updates its roster of clergy, staff, vestry, and workers by December 31 each year and submits the diocesan compliance form with its annual Financial and Records Review/Audit, with compliance documentation due to the ADGL Director of Administration by September 1. The Safe Church Director maintains these records.

CONCLUSION

Christ Our Hope has implemented the above policy for the purpose of caring for and protecting the parish. Adopting and implementing these policies helps to provide a safe and secure environment. All clergy, staff, and volunteers will be instructed to read and follow this policy.

It is Christ Our Hope's intent that all workers in the church should be held to a higher standard of excellence in regard to morality and should be recognized by the positive response to the call of God on their lives. Clergy, staff, and volunteers should not take lightly the responsibility of being a representative of Christ Our Hope in all encounters within the church, the community, and the world.

After thoroughly reading the information in this policy, please sign and return the last page to the Rector or their designee to be placed in your file. Please keep a copy of this policy on file for future reference.