

Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee

SAFEGUARDING GOD'S PEOPLE POLICY

[safeguarding@edtn.org](mailto:safeguarding@edtn.org)

Updated February 2019

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Preface	Safeguarding God's People: Policy Introduction and Purpose
I.	Policy Prohibiting Sexual Misconduct
II.	Responsibility for Administration
III.	Training Requirements
IV.	Definitions
V.	Safe Church Policy Practices: In Pastoral Relationships
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Code of Conduct for Pastoral Relationships</li><li>• Certification Requirements</li><li>• Appropriate and Inappropriate Behaviors</li><li>• Monitoring and Supervising Pastoral Relationships</li><li>• Clergy Directives for Spiritual Counseling as Mental Health Provider</li><li>• Ministry Settings</li></ul>
VI.	Safe Church Policy Practices: Working with Children and Youth
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Code of Conduct with Children and Youth</li><li>• Pastoral Counseling with Children and Youth</li><li>• Appropriate and Inappropriate Behaviors</li></ul>
VII.	Related Policies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harassment and Discrimination</li><li>• Bullying</li><li>• Social Media</li></ul>
VIII.	Reporting Sexual Misconduct
IX.	Training Requirements: Safeguarding God's People
X.	Documentation and Transfers
XI.	Recertification Requirements

Diocese of Tennessee  
**SAFEGUARDING GOD'S PEOPLE: POLICY**  
Updated February 2019

---

**SAFEGUARDING GOD'S PEOPLE: POLICY INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE**

In our churches, each time we baptize a child of God, whether an infant or an adult, we renew our Baptismal Covenant and are reminded that our call as members of the body of Christ is to “seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves” and to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being” (*BCP* 305). As the Body of Christ, we come together to form a loving, trusting community of believers committed to the promises of God in Jesus Christ. Whether we are lay or ordained, we are to treat members of our congregations, other staff members, and all in need who come to us, in such a manner that they may experience the healing ministry of Christ and be received with the same care and dignity our Lord showed to those who came to him.

Our churches are to be places of sanctuary for all of God's people. The expectation of sanctuary in a sacred space is one of safety and community. To be a sanctuary, the Church must form itself as a pastoral community where trust is expected and upheld. Trust is fundamental to covenantal love and the well-being of the Christian community. Christian people have the right to expect that those they choose as leaders, lay and ordained, are committed to standards of behavior that are trustworthy. Pastoral leadership in the Church is a calling that entails the highest standards of personal responsibility and integrity.

The Episcopal Church recognizes the tragic reality of the existence of sexual misconduct by clergy and other church workers. It is a problem that reaches far and wide and is not confined only to religious institutions. It is a problem that does not discriminate based upon race, ethnicity, gender or social and economic standing. The issue of sexual misconduct by church workers, clerical or lay, is an extremely difficult one. The abuse of power and position has devastating effects for all parties involved and causes great pain for the whole congregation. Sexual misconduct and the abuse of power or position are condemned; neither will be tolerated in the Diocese of Tennessee. However, it is also understood that sexual misconduct may be committed unknowingly (or for causes not immediately recognized). Also, allegations of such misconduct may be made mistakenly or without foundation. Consequently, it has become imperative to express, as official Diocesan policy, a statement of policies and procedures for dealing with allegations of sexual misconduct against clergy and other church workers.

Allegations of sexual misconduct will be taken seriously and will be investigated promptly. These policies and procedures provide fairness to the accusing party and to the accused and include a healing process for the accusing party, the accused, and, if applicable, an affected congregation. By increasing our awareness of the issues related to abuse, harassment, and exploitation we increase the possibility of identifying those persons in our midst who may be abused. With knowledge, we can reach out pastorally to those persons, offering them the

experience of empathy, compassion, and support. We pray that by promulgating these policies and procedures, church workers, both lay and ordained, will recognize their proper boundaries and, armed with that knowledge, will stay within those boundaries.

## **I. Policy Prohibiting Sexual Misconduct**

The Diocese of Tennessee is committed to providing a healthy, safe, and nurturing environment wherein, by God's grace, the full work of the Church can be carried out. Sexual misconduct on the part of any clergyperson, employee, or volunteer of any congregation, institution, organization, school or agency within the Diocese violates the mission of the church, is prohibited, and will not be tolerated.

## **II. Responsibility for Administration**

- A. The Rector, Priest in Charge, Vicar, Head of School, any Directors of any Diocesan entity, Executive Directors, or any other person serving in these or equivalent roles in Diocesan institutions, are directly responsible to the Bishop for the implementation and administration of the policies and procedures outlined in *Safeguarding God's People: Protecting Adults*.
- B. The implementation and administration of these policies and procedures may be delegated to other staff members or volunteers, but the ultimate responsibility may not be delegated. Supervision of these administrative processes by the Heads of Congregations or Schools, Executive Directors, etc. is required to assure appropriate compliance and confidentiality. The administrator of these policies must be certified in Safeguarding God's People and be extensively familiar with the policies and procedures in order to make appropriate decisions about their application in the local ministry setting. The administrator is to contact the Diocesan Canon to the Ordinary or the Diocesan Safeguarding Administrator (email [safeguarding@edtn.org](mailto:safeguarding@edtn.org)) for clarification of the policies or guidance in applying them.

## **III. Training Requirements**

- A. The Diocese of Tennessee requires all clergy and lay employees, plus some volunteers, to complete the required Safeguarding training modules (see Section IX of this Policy) within 90 days of hire. This is in addition to any training, which may have previously been taken in another diocese, school or institution.
- B. Training recertification is required every five years. Recertification options are described in Section XI of this Policy.
- C. Clergy certifications are managed through the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee. Lay certifications are managed by the local church or school administration

office. For additional support or guidance, contact the Diocesan Safeguarding administrator by email at [safeguarding@edtn.org](mailto:safeguarding@edtn.org).

#### **IV. Definitions**

- A. A Child is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years.
- B. A Youth is defined as 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, but still in high school.
- C. An Adult is anyone over the age of 18 years old that is not in high school.
- D. Sexual Misconduct. Sexual misconduct encompasses a range of behavior(s) used to obtain sexual gratification against another's will or at the expense of another, or outside of one's own marriage covenant. Sexual misconduct includes but is not limited to sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and sexual harassment. This definition also includes sexual molestation of a minor (under 18 years of age). The Diocese of Tennessee considers all forms of sexual misconduct intolerable and unacceptable.
- E. Sexual Abuse. No person attending or leading a Diocesan sponsored program is to be emotionally or sexually abused or molested. This includes but is not limited to:
- Physical abuse defined as non-accidental bodily injury of one person.
  - Emotional abuse defined as the spoken or unspoken devaluing of another.
  - Sexual abuse defined as any sexualized behavior persons when there is an unequal distribution of power, such as when one party is significantly older, larger, stronger, or holds more authority.
- F. Sexual Exploitation. Sexual misconduct also includes sexual exploitation. As set forth in the Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation, sexual exploitation is the development or attempt to develop a sexual relationship between a person in a ministerial position, lay or ordained, and an individual with whom he or she has a pastoral relationship. (Married or dating relationships are covered in Section C of these policies.)
- G. Sexual Harassment. Sexual harassment in the workplace is also included in the definition of prohibited sexual misconduct. Sexual harassment is defined in the Diocese's Policies Prohibiting Sexual Harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature in which: (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or relationship with the Diocese; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by the individual is used as a basis for employment or other decisions affecting that person; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

**V. Safe Church Policy and Practices: In Pastoral Relationships**

- A. Definition of Pastoral Relationship: A pastoral relationship is defined as a relationship between a person in a duly appointed ministerial position, lay or ordained, whether employee or volunteer, and any person who a) attends a congregation or other ministry setting in which the minister serves and/or who b) seeks ministry from the minister.

In addition to Clergy, other persons with Pastoral Relationships may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Heads of Schools; Heads of Diocesan Entities/Organizations; Members of Vestries, Bishop's Committees and School Boards; Parish Treasurer; Lay Eucharistic Visitors; Stephen Ministers; Community of Hope Visitors; Hospital Visitors; Lay Pastoral Leaders; Music Ministers/ Choir Directors; Youth/Children Ministers; Spiritual Directors; Life Leadership/Peer Coaches; Licensed Worship Leaders (preachers, catechists); Interns; Parish Administrator or Administrative Assistant; New Member Ministry Director/Outreach Coordinator; Persons who do field work; Leaders/Facilitators of Bible Studies or Cursillo (serving on teams); Christian Formation (e.g. EFM mentors; Catechumenate sponsors); Safeguarding Ministries (Safeguarding Coordinators); Small Group Ministries (e.g. formation workshops); Mission Trip leaders; ECW; Brotherhood of St. Andrew; Daughters of the King.

- B. Code of Conduct. Individuals with pastoral relationships must agree to and comply with the following code of conduct:

1. Understand that the Church will not tolerate the sexual exploitation of any person;
2. Never sexually exploit any person they serve or work with on behalf of the church, school, or institution;
3. Comply with the policies defined in Policies Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation;
4. Never engage in any sexual or inappropriate relationship with a person in a Pastoral Relationship;
5. Immediately seek advice from the Bishop's office if there are any questions or concerns about any of these policies or their expectations;
6. Report any inappropriate behavior, boundary violations, or policy violations;
7. Acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to prevent sexual exploitation of adults.
8. Persons who have Pastoral Relationships are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with anyone with whom they have a Pastoral Relationship, so long as the Pastoral Relationship continues. This prohibition specifically includes having sexual contact with any person in the Pastoral Relationship.
9. Persons who have Pastoral Relationships are required to maintain clear and appropriate boundaries and to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Whenever possible, persons who have pastoral relationships should have one-

on-one meetings with adults only during regularly scheduled hours, by appointment, on church premises or in other appropriate professional settings when others are present in the building.

C. Certification Requirements for Persons who have Pastoral Relationships

1. Any and all Church Personnel who have Pastoral Relationships must complete the required Safeguarding training modules, as outlined in Section IX of this Policy. Additional modules may be required depending on the role of the participant. Certification must be completed within 90 days of the start of the Pastoral Relationship.
2. In addition to completing the required training modules, certification requirements include the following:
  - a. Be known to clergy and congregation for 6 months.
  - b. Individual interview with the applicant.
  - c. Application completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct a background check.
  - d. Background check via a nationwide sexual offender and criminal history registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past ten (10) years.
  - e. Reference checks with persons who know the applicant. No more than one may be a relative and one must be outside the congregation.
  - f. Safeguarding God's People: Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation training.

D. Examples of Appropriate Physical Contact. Some forms of physical contact may be appropriate between those in Pastoral Relationships, provided they are welcomed by the recipient. These include the following:

- Brief hugs;
- Handshakes;
- Holding hands during prayer;
- Pats on the shoulder or back;
- Touching hands;
- Touching shoulders;
- Touching arms;
- Holding hands when a person is upset.

E. Examples of Inappropriate Physical Contact. The following are examples of inappropriate conduct that is prohibited for those who are in a Pastoral Relationship:

- Using pastoral relationship to meet own needs;
- Any form of unwanted affection;
- Surprise or sudden touching;
- Full frontal hugs or “bear hugs”;

- Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas;
- Lying down or sleeping beside another;
- Massages;
- Patting others on their thigh, knee or leg;
- Tickling or wrestling;
- Touching or hugging from behind;
- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces;
- Kisses on the mouth;
- Showing affection while in isolated areas;
- Comments or compliments, whether verbal or written, that relate to a person's body or appearance or could be viewed as sexually suggestive;
- Giving gifts or money to favored individuals;
- Receiving or requesting personal loans, substantial gifts and/or money;
- Repeated or private meetings after hours or away from church property;
- Electronic communications, such as e-mails or texts that contain personal disclosures or solicitations of an intimate relationship;
- Seeking excessive private time;
- Providing personal access, such as a personal e-mail address or cell phone number, if that is not generally available to others;
- Possessing, using or referring to any sexually oriented materials, such as magazines or videos;
- Sharing sexually oriented materials or using the internet to view or download such material, whether on or off church property;
- Discussing sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing the use of sexual oriented or explicit material, such as pornography, videos, or materials;
- Unwillingness to cease conduct after being told it is unwelcome;
- Inappropriate interaction on Social Media (See Social Media Guidelines).

If a person in a Pastoral Relationship is ever unsure about whether one of these types of touching is appropriate, he or she should ask permission and wait for a response before making physical contact.

F. Monitoring and Supervising Pastoral Relationships. In addition to the other steps outlined above, the monitoring and supervising of persons who have Pastoral Relationships should include the following:

1. Maintaining an up-to-date list of persons who have Pastoral Relationships in the church records.
2. Requiring that all new activities that involve Pastoral Relationships be approved by the head of the congregation, school or institution before the activity is to begin. Requests to develop new activities or programs should be submitted in writing to the designated head.

G. Clergy Directives for Spiritual Counseling. There are laws that prohibit sexual exploitation between mental healthcare providers and those to whom they are providing those services. (TN Adult Protection Act T.C.A 71-6-102(2)). Clergy are included within the definition of “mental health provider” unless the services they provide cover only spiritual counseling. For this reason, it is important to follow these guidelines:

1. Clergy and others in Pastoral Relationships should not go outside their areas of expertise and training, but instead should make a referral to a physician, psychologist or other mental health professional for issues that involve those specialties. A maximum of three sessions of spiritual counseling may precede referral.
2. Clergy who are licensed or credentialed as mental healthcare professionals, such as psychologists, marriage or family therapists, or substance abuse counselors, must draw distinctions when they are functioning on behalf of the church and make it clear to those they are serving that they are not functioning in the role of a mental healthcare provider when working on behalf of the church, but only as a spiritual advisor.
3. Clergy who are licensed and providing services as mental healthcare providers while also serving as spiritual advisors on behalf of the church should clearly separate those roles by maintaining separate offices or locations and clearly communicate to all concerned when they are acting as a mental healthcare provider, as opposed to a spiritual advisor or spiritual counselor.
4. Clergy who are separately licensed or credentialed as mental healthcare providers must maintain in full force separate professional insurance coverage at all times for any work they do outside their church role as spiritual advisors and provide proof of insurance to the church on an annual basis. The insurance must have per occurrence limits of at least \$1,000,000 and aggregate limits of at least \$3,000,000, including coverage for sexual misconduct, as defined in the policies, with limits of at least \$50,000. The insurance policy must name the church employer or church as an additional insured.

H. Ministry Settings

Locations where Pastoral Relationships occur should, whenever possible, be in open, visible spaces (or in closed spaces with windows, unobstructed by blinds or other barriers) where casual monitoring by others is convenient; for example, in areas where other church personnel are visible or work nearby. The location that is selected should convey safety and comfort without the use of couches, loveseats, or other furniture that would encourage close seating.

The following recommendations will help create an appropriate setting for Pastoral Relationships that are private but allows for appropriate monitoring and supervision:

1. Comfortable chairs positioned at a 45-degree angle from each other create a good area for conversation. Couches and love seats are discouraged, but if they are used, persons who have Pastoral Relationships should sit across from, not beside, one another. Furniture that reclines should be avoided.
2. Artwork should be tasteful and not offensive.
3. Windows in walls or doors should be unobstructed by blinds, furniture, curtains, or posters so that the space is always subject to casual monitoring.
4. A sense of privacy can be maintained by arranging the furniture so that persons who provide pastoral care are always visible, but the parishioner or visitor does not feel exposed.
5. If the space has a private entrance, and it is used, ensure that staff knows when someone is in the space and when it is being used for Pastoral Relationships.

## **VI. Safe Church Policy and Practices: Working with Children and Youth**

- A. The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our Church Personnel from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate.
- B. Code of Conduct with Children and Youth
  1. Established Ratios: every program must have established ratios for adults and children/youth, including activities that happen off church property. A minimum of 2 adults should be present during any church activity with children or youth.
  2. Visibility: church school classrooms and nursery rooms must permit visibility into the room at all times.
  3. Open Door Policy: all programs and activities will take place under an open door policy, meaning that parents, clergy, staff have the right to visit and observe at any time, unannounced.
  4. Age Guidelines: all children/youth under the age of 18 must be supervised directly by adults over the age of 21.
  5. Safety procedures: programs should develop age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children/youth using restrooms, crossing streets etc. Particular procedures for nursery care should also be developed, in regards to tasks such as diaper changing and parent-child relationship identifiers.
  6. Congregation-Sponsored Program List: an up to date list of approved congregation-sponsored programs for children/youth will be maintained and posted by the church office.
  7. Permission Forms: written permission forms must be completed and signed before church personnel may transport to any activities. Whenever possible,

each vehicle should contain two unrelated adults. Drivers should be at least 25 years of age.

8. Release Forms: signed release forms must be completed prior to participation in church activities. Procedures to ensure that children/youth are released only to their parents/guardians or those designated by signed release.
9. Screening and Background checks: Paid Staff and clergy must all be subject to appropriate screening and background checks. Training for the Safeguarding God's People is also required where appropriate.
10. Sleeping arrangements: church personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags, tent, hotel rooms or other rooms with children/youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all the children/youth present in the beds, sleeping bags, tent, hotel rooms or other rooms. Multiple adults can sleep in one open space with children/youth.
11. Viewable Counseling: one-on-one counseling with children/youth will be done in an open, public or other place where private conversations are possible but occur in the full view of others.
12. Remaining in View: church personnel (paid or unpaid) are prohibited from being alone with a child/youth or with multiple children/youth.

C. Appropriate Behaviors

Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection as a crucial component of healthy ministry, as well as to identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. These Guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for future abuse. By modeling these appropriate behaviors we help children assert what is appropriate in order to maintain their own boundaries. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children or youth.

D. Examples of Appropriate Physical Contact:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- "High-fives" and hand slapping.
- Verbal praise.
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Holding hands while walking with small children.
- Sitting beside small children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- Holding hands during prayer.
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate. (For example, in certain Asian communities this gesture should be avoided. Again, be wise).

E. Examples of Inappropriate Physical Contact:

The following forms of physical contact are considered INAPPROPRIATE with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Kisses.
- Holding children over three years old on the lap.
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
- Wrestling with children or youth.
- Tickling children or youth.
- Piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
- Any form of unwanted affection, attention, or favoritism.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing" or "You look really hot in those jeans."
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth without first consulting the parents, Youth or Children's Minister, Rector, or the Diocesan Coordinator.

F. The following behavioral norms are required of all who work with children and youth in the Diocese of Tennessee:

1. Respect for the privacy and dignity of children and youth by not putting them in inappropriate unmonitored one-to-one situations;
2. Age-appropriate arrangements for sleeping, bathing, dressing, or showering. It is not appropriate for leaders to share exclusive sleeping quarters with youth;
3. The prohibition of any sexually orientated materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of children and youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program;
4. The prohibition of dating, romantic involvements, or sexual contact with a child or youth;
5. Appropriate physical contact (see the Guidelines below);
6. The prohibition of discussing your own sexual activities and fantasies with children or youth, or in their presence; and
7. The prohibition of the non-sacramental use, possession, distribution or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs.

G. Pastoral Counseling with Children and Youth

1. Because of the relational nature of Children's and Youth Ministry, one-on-one pastoral counseling scenarios are expected. When one-on-one conversation or pastoral care is advisable between an adult leader and a youth, another adult is to be present, or at least aware of the place of consultation and who is being counseled.
2. There may be times when it is appropriate or necessary for an adult leader to be alone with a young person (e.g. unmonitored one-on-one situations: pastoral counseling or transportation). The Diocese of Tennessee advises the adult to arrange pastoral meetings in public places such as restaurants, coffee shops, or a corner away from the action but in full view. Always inform other responsible adults about the appointment or plans. Spontaneous or secretive activity with a single young person may foster a high-risk situation. Seclusion is to be avoided.

## **VII. Related Policies and Guidelines**

### **A. Harassment and Discrimination Policy**

The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, color, sex, (including sexual orientation or sexual identity), national origin, age, religion, or disability toward any person. To report discrimination or harassment based on any of these protected classes, please follow the guidelines for reporting sexual harassment. All complaints will be promptly investigated, and corrective action designed to stop the harassment or discrimination will be taken.

### **B. Bullying Policy**

Bullying is manifested in various ways: abusive language; offensive name calling; acts or threats of physical abuse; vandalism; theft or destruction of property. Bullying violates a person's sense of worth and their immeasurable value to God. Bullying of all forms, including homophobic bullying, inhibit a person's ability to feel safe at an Episcopal school or church. Therefore, bullying of any form will not be tolerated in entities of the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee. Incidents of bullying that may occur shall be reported immediately to the head of the institution or to the Diocesan Office. All reports will be taken seriously, will be investigated, and disciplinary action will be taken as deemed to be appropriate.

### **C. Social Media Policy**

All digital communications must comply with the same Safeguarding policies as all other EDTN entities. The following guidelines apply commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries for social networking, communication, online forums and gaming.

1. Implement consistent privacy settings that respect personal boundaries with all participants across all platforms.
  - a. Remember that privacy settings do not ensure confidentiality.
  - b. Each church/school/organization should develop and publish agreed upon privacy settings that staff and volunteers will use, and make that

information available to parishioners, teachers, students, parents, and employees.

## 2. Accountability Guidelines

- a. Adults (parents) should be made aware of how leaders utilize social media platforms.
- b. Communication should be with groups, in public areas rather than in private messages. This includes image sharing.
- c. Youth Ministers: When electronic pastoral communications are of a potentially sensitive nature, they should be saved and disclosed to supervising clergy and, as appropriate, to parents. (Examples: bullying; abuse; etc.)
- d. Ministry presence on social media platforms should have more than one administrator.
- e. Social media is rarely appropriate for a sensitive matter that requires pastoral care and attention. In those instances, a face to face meeting or phone call is preferable, as it allows for an assessment of tone and demeanor that can be helpful in evaluating the situation and determining both the urgency and appropriateness of a response. When received communication raises concerns or questions it must be shared with a ministry leader.
- f. Frequently review your accessible content and photos. Keep informed about new and emerging social media platforms.
- g. Online groups and virtual groups are required to follow the same Safeguarding policies as all other diocesan entities. In group communication platforms, leaders should create covenants to govern group communication, addressing:
  - i. appropriate & inappropriate language and behavior; profane or derogatory language is forbidden
  - ii. who may join and/or view group activity
  - iii. content that can be posted/published on the site or page
  - iv. how images will be taken and shared
  - v. consequences for breaking the covenant: removal from group
  - vi. mandatory reporting rules
- h. Any inappropriate material posted in online groups should be removed from the page, but should be saved by the administrator and reported to the ministry leader to be addressed or reported as necessary.
- i. When video chatting, a leader should be mindful of appropriate attire and surroundings, as they are visible to the viewer. One-on-One video chatting should follow the same Safe Church guidelines as when meeting with people face to face. Video chatting should not occur behind closed doors.
- j. If posting photos of children online or in any publication, obtain a photo release from parents. (This should be done annually for schools and programs). Do not provide personal or identifying information about the children or youth pictured. The following **Photo Release** wording may be added to school and program registration:

*“I understand that photos or videos of my child and others may be taken during Sunday school and other church/school events. I consent to the use of my child’s photo or likeness in promotional materials such as church/school website and other social media outlets. I understand that my child’s identifying information will not be provided unless I give permission at a later time.”*

- k. Be aware that all communications sent digitally are not confidential and potentially may be shared or reposted to other platforms or people without an individual’s permission or knowledge.
- l. Use prudent judgment in the timing of your communications. For example, consider work hours, school hours, meal times, vacations and sleep schedules.

### **VIII. Reporting Sexual Misconduct**

- A. The Diocese of Tennessee prohibits sexual misconduct and sexual abuse by all church workers (lay, ordained, paid, volunteer) and seeks through these policies and procedures to provide an environment safe from these prohibited activities for the children and youth who participate in the programs and activities of its parishes and associated institutions.
- B. The Diocese seeks through these policies and procedures to provide an effective and appropriate response to any kind and all accusations of behaviors prohibited by these policies and procedures. The pastoral concern of the Church and its Bishop is to both the accuser and the accused, the victim and the perpetrator, individuals and the parishes, organizations, and institutions of the Diocese.
- C. The Diocesan Bishop and the Diocesan Chancellor shall be made aware of all accusations of sexual misconduct. These policies and procedures will be made available and will be reviewed by all ordained and lay leaders of each Diocesan parish and institution.
- D. Reporting Procedures
  1. Anyone who believes that he or she or someone else has been subjected to sexual exploitation should promptly report it to one of the following:
    - The head of the congregation, school, or institution
    - A warden of the congregation
    - The Bishop or the Canon to the Ordinary, Diocese of Tennessee, 3700 Woodmont Blvd, Nashville, TN 37215, 615-251-3322
  2. Clergy and other church personnel are required to report immediately any suspected or known sexual exploitation to one or more of the individuals above. Diocesan employees should promptly report any complaints or policy violations to the Canon to the Ordinary or the Bishop. Complaints of sexual

exploitation may be made by telephone, letter, fax, email or in-person meeting.

3. No one who reports sexual misconduct will be retaliated against or adversely treated because he or she made a complaint.
4. The Diocese may suspend any individual who is the subject of a complaint of sexual exploitation or sexual harassment during the pendency of the investigation. If the investigation substantiates that the complaint is valid, immediate corrective action designed to stop the misconduct and prevent its recurrence will be taken. Such corrective action may include discipline, up to and including discharge or dismissal of the offending person.
5. Nothing in this policy requires the person complaining of sexual exploitation or sexual harassment to report the matter to the individual who is the subject of the complaint.

#### **IX. Training Requirements: Safeguarding God's People**

- A. All Clergy, Employees, Vestry Members and designated Volunteers must complete these six online "Safeguarding" training modules:
  1. *Meet Sam*
  2. *It Happened To Me*
  3. *Keeping Your Church Safe* (school personnel, please choose *Keeping Your School Safe*)
  4. *Your Policies*
  5. *Safeguarding God's People: Preventing Sexual Exploitation in communities of Faith FOR MINISTRIES*
  6. *Safeguarding God's People: Preventing Sexual Harassment FOR MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS*
- B. To register for these online courses, contact your local administrator (rector, priest-in-charge, principal). Each training module takes approximately 15-20 minutes. This is not a graded course of study, but you will reap maximum benefit by completing all section of each module.

#### **X. Documentation and Transfers:**

- A. Lay Church Personnel who transfer within the Diocese of Tennessee should contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Administrator ([safeguarding@edtn.org](mailto:safeguarding@edtn.org)) to update their certification to their new location. Clergy who transfer from another diocese must first contact the Diocesan office to arrange for Safeguarding God's People—Clergy training requirements.
  1. Persons taking Safeguarding God's People training for the

first time, or individuals new to the Diocese of Tennessee, should register for Safeguard Online training through the local Safeguarding Administrator.

#### **XI. Recertification Requirements**

- A. Recertification is required after five years.
- B. You may recertify by taking the one-module online refresher course titled “Abuse Prevention Refresher.”
- C. Recertification may also include a new background check. Check with your local administrator.

#### ***Questions?***

*Contact your local Safeguarding administrator or the [safeguarding@edtn.org](mailto:safeguarding@edtn.org).*