



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

TRAINING FOR A SAFE AND HEALTHY CHURCH

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The Commons
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Training for a Safe and Healthy Church

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Training for a Safe and Healthy Church

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1. Power, Privilege and Ministry

A. Sources of Power and Privilege in our Culture

❖ Definitions:

Power is **the capacity to bring about a change in oneself, in one's circumstances, in relationships, even in the wider world. It can also be the ability to be oneself, to be free, to express one's true thoughts and emotions.**¹ Power can also refer to aggression or power over another.²

Privilege can be conferred on members of a group simply by virtue of membership in that group. Such privilege is unearned, not the result of achievement or work. The word privilege comes from the Latin *privus* and *lex* **which means "private law."** This suggests different laws for different groups of people instead of one set of laws that apply to all.³

❖ Reflections:

What are some of the ways people gain power or privilege in our culture?

How do you fit into these sources of power or privilege. What are the "differences" that enhance your power or privilege? What are the "differences" that diminish your power or privilege?

Notice that some of our power and privilege has been earned or acquired through our individual efforts; some comes from being members of groups we were born into. Notice that power and privilege are not randomly or equally distributed.

B. Humans Attribute Power and Privilege to the Differences Created by God

- ❖ God created all that is, including the difference between and among human beings. Our differences may be based on different cultural or life circumstances including race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ableness, language, political views, and religious differences. It is we who attribute power and/or privilege to this diversity created by God. We tend to see our differences as the **basis for judging "others" as less than (or better than) us or as unworthy of our love or our consideration.**⁴

This causes us to be alienated from God and each other. **With God's help we can build bridges across differences so that we can be restored to right relationship with God and each other and valuing differences requires us to understand "the other".**

- ❖ **Recognizing and valuing our differences requires us to "see" and understand "the other".**

1 Kondrath, William, *God's Tapestry*, The Alban Institute, 2008, 34

2 Kondrath at 34

3 Kondrath at 261

4 Kondrath at xvi

C. Power, Privilege and Responsibility in our Ministerial Relationships

Relationships among members of a Christian community can be deep and trusting. This allows members to be vulnerable with each other and in the presence of God. This vulnerability or openness flows from a number of dynamics including:

❖ Nature of Ministerial Relationships

- Covenant is both a relationship and an agreement with mutual respect, trust and commitment at its core. Our Baptismal Covenant exemplifies these qualities, and reads in part, as follows:

Q: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

A: *I will with God's help.*

Q: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

A: *I will with God's help.*

Q: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

A: *I will with God's help.*

- Trust by its very nature renders us vulnerable while deepening relationships with others. Any of us can be vulnerable to exploitation when we are in relationship with someone we trust.

Reflection:

Recall a time when you or someone you know has been vulnerable in a relationship with a trusted person. What happens to the balance of power in a trusting relationship?

- Crisis can render any of us vulnerable.

Reflection:

Reflect on a time when you or someone you know has been vulnerable due to emotional, mental, spiritual or physical crisis. What happens to the balance of power when a person is in crisis?

❖ Responsibility in Ministerial Relationships (Lay or Ordained)

It is always the responsibility of the person offering ministry to ensure that his or her actions are for the benefit of the other, and to maintain appropriate boundaries. Generally, the person offering ministry (lay and ordained) has more power than the recipient of ministry.

❖ Misconduct: A Violation of Trust

Definition: Misconduct is a betrayal of trust by an ordained or lay leader.

Reflection:

- Who is affected by clergy misconduct?
- Who is affected by misconduct of a lay leader?

❖ Reporting Misconduct

Concerns regarding clergy misconduct should be reported to an Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) Intake Officer. Anyone may contact an ECCT Intake Officer to report concerns. This initiates a process to hold clergy accountable for their behaviors. This process of accountability, as set out in Title IV of the Constitution and Canons for the Government of The Episcopal Church, seeks to promote justice, restitution, amendment of life, repentance, healing, forgiveness and reconciliation among all involved or affected by clergy misconduct. For more information on this process of accountability, please consult materials on the ECCT website regarding Safe Church processes (www.episcopalct.org), or contact one of the Intake Officers.

The ECCT Intake Officers are Chester Fairlie and the Rev. Terry Marie Wysong. Chester can be reached at 860-501-2121 or attyctf@gmail.com and Terry can be reached at 860-426-1856 or revtw@cox.net. More information may be found on our website under Clergy Disciplinary Process (Title IV) using the Resources tab.

Concerns regarding misconduct by a lay leader or parishioner should be reported to a trusted ordained leader and/or lay leader.

D. Boundaries in Ministerial Relationships

❖ Boundaries in Professional and Personal Relationships

Definitions:

Professional Relationship is a relationship whose purpose is to meet the client's/congregant's need for professional/ministerial assistance or service.

Personal Relationship is a relationship whose purpose is to meet the personal needs of the people involved.

TRAITS OF RELATIONSHIPS

<i>Traits</i>	<i>Professional Relationships</i>	<i>Personal Relationships</i>
Who serves whom?		
Whose needs are primary?		
What do people disclose? Is there self-disclosure? If so, how much and for what purpose?		
How much emotional distance?		
Are there boundaries?		
Who is responsible for maintaining the boundaries?		
Who holds the power?		

Relationship of clergy and parishioner is a professional relationship. The clergy person holds the power and has the responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries at all times.

Relationship of a lay minister providing ministry to another lay person, while not exactly a professional relationship, does have some of the traits of a professional relationship. The lay minister holds the power and has the responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries.

Violating boundaries in a community of faith can cause harm to individuals and the community.

❖ Guidelines for Ordained and Lay Ministry

These guidelines were originally drafted with a focus on ordained ministry and leadership. While clergy in the ECCT are expected to adhere to these guidelines, they are highly recommended for lay ministry and leadership.

1. Treat yourself with dignity and respect by taking good care of yourself. This includes:
 - a) Regular and consistent incorporation of wellness and self-care practices in your life.
 - b) Setting appropriate limits with parishioners as to availability and boundaries in the relationship.
 - c) Addressing any conflicts that arise between an ordained minister and a parishioner, group of parishioners or lay leaders, in healthy ways.
2. Comply with ECCT policies regarding ministry with children and youth. An outline for training purposes can be found on pages 13-15. The policy is also available on the diocesan website at www.episcopalct.org.
3. Comply with "Behavioral Standards for Ministry with Children or Youth". The policy can be found on page 13.
4. Refrain from dual relationships. Dual relationships occur when clergy attempt to relate to a person on two levels at the same time. This can happen when clergy attempt to relate to an individual both personally and professionally (i.e., as cleric and parishioner and at the same time in some other role such as supervisor and parish employee.) Dual relationships diminish the effectiveness of ministry. To avoid dual relationships:
 - a) Do not hire parishioners to serve in paid staff positions.
 - b) Avoid intimate personal relationships with parishioners or others to whom you minister.
 - c) Develop personal relationships with people outside of the parish to whom you do not offer ministry.
 - d) Do not allow a clergy spouse, partner or family member to serve on parish staff as a lay employee or as a parish officer or vestry member in the parish where the related clergy person serves.
 - e) Seek to avoid having spouses/partners or members of the same family serving as officers or vestry members at the same time.
5. Accept only token gifts from parishioners and others to whom you minister. Be cautious of the ramifications of accepting major gifts.
6. Refuse to accept loans of any kind from parishioners and others to whom you minister.
7. Refuse to agree to be named as a beneficiary or to act as an administrator, conservator **or executor in a parishioner's will or that of anyone to whom you minister.**

8. Maintain confidentiality of information shared in a pastoral relationship. This means that clergy will not tell other people personal information a parishioner shares, unless that parishioner gives permission. However, the legal obligation of mandated reporting requires clergy to disclose information to the appropriate state agency in specific situations, except when a priest learns the information within the bounds of the sacrament of confession.
9. Comply with legally mandated reporting requirements regarding the suspected abuse and/or neglect of children, the elderly and vulnerable adults. See page 18 for information on reporting suspected abuse and neglect.
10. Refrain from treating mental health or substance abuse issues unless you are licensed or certified, and insured to do so. To avoid dual relationships, clergy are not to treat anyone who is a member or attends a parish in which the cleric is serving.
11. Restrict involvement in the evaluation of mental health or substance abuse issues to no more than three sessions. By the third session referral should be made to other services providers for further evaluation and/or treatment, if needed. The limit of three sessions does not apply to premarital conversations.
12. Comply with the responsibilities of being an employer if you are the cleric in charge with paid staff. This includes making decisions regarding hiring, supervision, record keeping, and termination, either for cause or due to financial restrictions. It also includes responding to any and all allegations of misconduct by employees in a timely and appropriate manner.
13. Comply with financial practices as set forth by The Episcopal Church in Connecticut and The Episcopal Church. This includes conducting an annual audit of all accounts, including clergy discretionary and special ministry funds, and ensuring that the financial systems within your parish, such as money counters and those authorized to sign checks, are in accordance with the internal practices recommended by the ECCT and the Episcopal Church. (See the ECCT Parish and Financial Reporting Requirements and the Episcopal Church Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs.)
14. Bring resolution to relationships with parishioners when ordained ministry at a parish ends. When it comes time to leave a parish, it *is* expected that clergy will bring resolution to relationships with all parishioners in a manner that is healthy for the cleric and the cleric's family, as well as the parish. It is expected that once a cleric's service at a parish ends, he or she will no longer perform any clergy functions for any members of that parish or others affiliated with the parish, and will not worship at that parish. For more information, consult "Leaving Well Guidelines" available on the ECCT website www.episcopalct.org.
15. Participation in diocesan events. It is an expectation that clergy attend ECCT convention and other diocesan wide events such as Clergy Days and Clergy Conferences. Participation in ordinations and celebrations of new ministry are strongly encouraged.

2. Prevention of Exploitation of Adults

❖ Definitions:

Sexual Misconduct includes sexual behavior by a member of the clergy with:

1. A person under 18 years old
2. A person in high school
3. A person who is legally incompetent
4. An employee
5. A volunteer
6. A student
7. Someone in the same congregation as the cleric
8. A person with whom the cleric has a pastoral relationship

Sexual behavior is defined very broadly. It includes "any physical contact, bodily movement, speech, communication or other activity sexual in nature or that is intended to arouse or gratify erotic interest or sexual desires".

Pastoral Relationship is a relationship between a cleric and any person to whom the cleric currently provides or has provided:

1. Counseling
2. Pastoral care
3. Spiritual direction or guidance, or
4. Has received information within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent

❖ Reflections:

1. What are the attributes or characteristics of a pastoral relationship?
2. What signs can you watch for that may indicate an inappropriate relationship between a clergy person or church leader and a parishioner?
3. What should you do if you observe any of these warning signs?

Definitions from the disciplinary canons of The Episcopal Church (IV2). Reflection Questions from Participant Workbook for Congregations, Preventing Sexual Exploitation of Adults in Communities of Faith, Church Pension Group, 2008.)

3. Protection of Children and Youth

A. Risks Faced by Children and Youth: Group exercise

B. Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse of Children

Things to watch for in adults...

1. Physical Boundary Violations: touching too much or touching in ways that most adults would not touch a child. Perpetrators do this to get the children and adults around the children accustomed to lots of physical contact.

Examples include:

- Roughhousing
- Tickling
- Wrestling
- Too many hugs
- Hugs with too much body contact

2. Emotional Boundary Violations: Treating the relationship with a child as if it were a romantic or intimate adult relationship. Perpetrators do this to get close to a child and to gain influence over the child through the relationship.

Examples include:

- Treating or talking about a child like a friend (or peer)
- Spending too much time with a child
- Getting involved with too many of a child's activities

3. Behavioral Boundary Violations: Involving the child in activities that his or her parents would not allow the child to do. Perpetrators do this because a child is less likely to disclose abuse after the child has engaged in activities that the child wants to keep secret. Examples include:

- Allowing the child to do things that the parents would not allow ("I know that your parents think you are too young, but I know how mature you are ...")
- Giving the child gifts without the parents' permission
- Getting the child to keep secrets from parents

C. When a Child Discloses Abuse

Things to do, say and avoid at the time of disclosure:

1. Be calm. Try not to act outraged or excited. The child has wisely chosen you to be a trusted adult.
2. Reassure the child that he/she did the right thing by telling you.
3. **Act as though you believe the child. Avoid saying things such as “are you sure that happened? That’s really horrible. Now he’ll really lose his job and the family will break up.”**
4. You can tell the child that he/she is not alone, that this has happened to other children.
5. You can tell the child that this is not his or her fault.
6. Do not ask for details about the abuse.
7. Do not make promises that you cannot keep. Do not promise to keep this a secret. Do not promise that you will keep the child safe or that he or she will never be abused again.
8. Do not say bad things about the alleged perpetrator.

Immediately after disclosure: Act

9. Tell the people that need to know about the disclosed abuse.
 - If you are a mandated reporter you must report the suspected child abuse to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). See pages 15 or 18 for contact information.
 - If you are not a mandated reporter, you are encouraged to make a report of the suspected child abuse to DCF and you are strongly encouraged to tell your pastor or other member of ordained clergy of the suspected abuse whether the suspected child abuse occurred within the church or in another setting.
 - Keep in mind that it is generally *not* your role to tell the child’s parents of the disclosed abuse
10. Seek out support for yourself.
11. Pray for all involved, including yourself.

D. Diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth

AS ADOPTED BY THE BISHOP AND DIOCESAN EXECUTIVE COUNCIL February 26, 2005
Revised June 7, 2006 and December 6, 2006

PREAMBLE

This policy is adopted in compliance with 2003 General Convention resolution BOO8. The aim of this policy is to make our Church a safe place, safe for those who worship, safe for those who minister, safe for those who come in need, safe for children and safe for all who seek or serve Christ. We believe that this policy helps us live out our Baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being.

1. SCREENING AND SELECTION FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Diocese will do background checks on all clergy who are deployed or licensed to officiate within the Diocese. The Diocese will also do background checks on any diocesan employees or volunteers who regularly work with children or youth.

Parishes are required to conduct public records checks on ALL existing and future employees and all existing and future volunteers who regularly work with children or youth. Parishes shall use a company designated by the diocese to conduct public records checks and shall be conducting such checks by 1/31/07.

Parishes are required to conduct the following components of a background check in addition to the public records check:

- a. a written application
- b. an interview
- c. reference checks

Volunteers should not be permitted to work with children or youth until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months.

2. BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH

Adults shall not:

- a. Provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs or pornography,
- b. Consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse of legal drugs at any **children's or youth event**,
- c. Be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs at any **children's or youth event**,
- d. Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior,
- e. Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth,
- f. Discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies with children or youth.

Firearms and concealed weapons are prohibited at any church activity. Rectors may make special exceptions for off-duty police officers or others required to carry firearms.

3. MONITORING PROGRAMS AND INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

At all events and ministries for children and youth there shall be at least two, unrelated adults present. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youths, that adult shall immediately report those circumstances to the Rector or senior warden. It may be appropriate for a Sunday School class to have only one teacher so long as at least one other adult can maintain visual contact with the teacher.

Any new programs, trips or events that involve children or youth should be given prior approval by the Rector and the Vestry. No event for children or youth shall take place in a private residence without prior approval by the Vestry.

Adults who work with children or youth within a congregation should be discouraged from having a separate and private relationship with any unrelated child from the church away from sanctioned church youth activities.

Each parish is encouraged to **conduct a "safe church audit" annually** to review practices and policies within the congregation.

Parishes should adopt safe church policies, consistent with the requirements in this policy. Parish policies should be clear, should be posted in areas where activities for children and youth take place and should be given to all adults who regularly work with children or youth and to parents. Parish policies should include the names and phone numbers of the Rector or priest, senior warden, and contact person in the **Bishop's office**.

Parish computers should have adequate password protection.

Parishes should have clear guidelines and adequate supervision (by parish staff or authorized persons) of anyone using a parish computer to access the Internet. Be advised that any activity on a parish computer is not considered private and may be accessed by authorized persons.

4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Parishes are strongly encouraged to send parish employees and volunteers who work with children or youth to training on how to prevent child abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings. Each parish should maintain a record of those who have attended such training.

The Diocese shall require all clergy and employees and volunteers who work with children or youth at diocesan events to attend training on how to prevent child abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings. The Diocese will maintain records of those who have attended the training.

The Diocese will offer the requisite training. Individuals should be re-trained every three to four **years**. **The Bishop's office will approve curriculum and trainers for the requisite training**. Current training should be available for those who screen, train or supervise those who regularly work with children or youth.

5. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies shall immediately report the violation to the Rector and senior warden.

Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies by a clergy person shall immediately **report the violation to the Bishop's office.**

Anyone who has reason to suspect that child abuse has taken place at church or in another setting, is strongly encouraged to tell his or her parish priest or another member of ordained clergy. Any mandated reporter who has reason to suspect that child abuse has taken place shall report it to the appropriate civil authority.

Rectors hearing 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 volunteer ministry with the church.

The Bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy, or by adults 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.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The office of the Canon for Mission Integrity and Training can be reached by calling 203-639-3501, ext. 122.

The Abuse and Neglect Hotline for the Connecticut Department of Children and Families is 1-800-842-2288.

4. Protection of Elders

A. Warning Signs and Risk Factors

1. General signs of abuse
 - a. Frequent arguments or tension between the caregiver and the elderly person
 - b. Changes in personality or behavior of the elder
2. Signs of physical abuse
 - a. Unexplained injuries such as bruises, welts or scars
 - b. Broken bones, sprains or dislocations
 - c. Repeat of drug overdose or failure to take medication regularly (too much remaining)
 - d. Broken eye glasses or frames
 - e. Signs of being restrained, such as rope marks on wrists
 - f. Caregiver refuses to allow you privacy when visiting the elder
3. Signs of emotional abuse
 - a. Threatening, belittling, or controlling caregiver behavior that you witness
 - b. Behavior from elder that mimics dementia, such as rocking, sucking or mumbling to oneself
4. Signs of sexual abuse
 - a. Bruises around breasts or genitals
 - b. Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections
 - c. Vaginal or rectal bleeding, torn, stained or bloody underclothing
5. Signs of self-neglect or neglect by caregiver
 - a. Unusual weight loss, malnutrition, dehydration
 - b. Untreated physical problems (bed sores)
 - c. Unsanitary living conditions (dirt, bugs, soiled bedding and clothes)
 - d. Being left dirty or unbathed
 - e. Unsuitable clothing for the weather
 - f. Unsafe living conditions (no heat or running water)
6. Signs of abandonment
 - a. Desertion of elder at a public place
7. Signs of financial exploitation
 - a. **Significant withdrawals from elder's account**
 - b. **Sudden changes in elder's financial condition**
 - c. **Cash or items missing from elder's household**
 - d. Suspicious changes in wills, power of attorney, titles and insurance policies
 - e. Addition of **names to elder's signatory card**
 - f. Unpaid bills or lack of medical care even though the elder has enough money to pay for them.
 - g. ATM withdrawal when elder is bedridden or other financial activity the elder **couldn't have done**
 - h. Purchase of unnecessary services, goods or subscriptions

❖ Risk factors for elder abuse by caregivers:

The stress of elder care can lead to mental and physical problems that make caregivers burn out, impatient and unable to keep from lashing out against elders in their care.

❖ Things to watch for in caregivers:

- a) Inability to cope with stress
- b) Depression (which can be common among caregivers)
- c) Lack of support from other potential caregivers
- d) **The caregiver's perception that taking care of the elder is burdensome and without psychological reward**
- e) Substance abuse, drinking too much

(From Helpguide.org)

B. Reflections

1. What can parishes do to minister to an elder?

2. What can parishes do to minister to a caregiver or family member of an elder?

5. Reporting Suspected Abuse & Neglect

Anyone who suspects abuse, neglect or exploitation may intervene! People in certain professions (i.e. clergy, teachers, healthcare workers) are *mandated by law* to report suspected abuse and neglect. The following applies to everyone, whether or not mandated to report.

- a. If you have *reason to suspect* abuse occurred or that there is risk abuse may occur, you can intervene. *You do not have to know for sure* that abuse occurred.
- b. Your intervention may be the only way to stop abuse from continuing.
- c. To report suspected abuse, call the appropriate state agency from the list below.
- d. You can make a report anonymously without giving your name. (Mandated Reporters should give their names so there is a record of the report being made.)
- e. You are protected from legal liability as long as you make the report in good faith, meaning that you have a reason to suspect abuse.
- f. In an emergency, call 911 or the local police for an immediate response.
- g. If the suspected abuse occurred at church or involves a member of the church, notify your clergy so that pastoral care and support can be offered.

Children (under 18 years of age): Anyone may report suspected abuse or neglect of a child by calling the Department of Children and Families (DCF) hotline at 1-800-842-2288. Mandated reporters are required to call the DCF hotline within 12 hours of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected, and make a written report* (using DCF form 136) within 48 hours of making the oral report. DCF form 136 is available on the DCF website www.state.ct.us/dcf.

Elderly (60 years and older): Anyone may report suspected abuse or neglect (which includes self-neglect) or exploitation of an elder by calling the Department of Social Services at 1-888-385-4225. For after hour emergencies call Info-Line at 211. Mandated reporters must report within 5 calendar days of suspecting that an elder has been abused or neglected.

Adults with an intellectual disability (18-59 years of age): Anyone may report suspected abuse or neglect of an adult with an intellectual disability by calling the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (P & A) at 860-297-4300 or 800-842-7303. Mandated reporters are required to make an oral report to P & A within 72 hours of suspecting an adult with an intellectual disability has been abused or neglected, and make a written report (using form PA-6)* to P & A within 5 calendar days of making the initial oral report. Form PA-6 is available by calling P & A or on the P & A website www.ct.gov/opapd.

Clergy suspected of abuse, neglect or exploitation should be immediately reported to the bishop's office by calling 203-639-3501.

* When mandated reporters make a written report it is advisable to keep a secure copy of the report for your own records.

Closing Prayer

Officiant: Almighty God, we are continually amazed at the way you turn the world upside down. For a Savior of the world we would have chosen a powerful prince.

People: But you chose a carpenter's son born under questionable circumstances.

Officiant: For disciples to help Jesus through his ministry we would have chosen well connected wealthy people of the upper class to bank roll the operation,

People: But you chose fishermen, a tax collector, and other such outcasts.

Officiant: For a grand entrance into Jerusalem, we would have chosen a white Stallion.

People: But you chose a donkey.

Officiant: When riding high in the polls on Palm Sunday we would have chosen to stay there as long as we could,

People: But you chose to clear the temple.

Officiant: For a place of coronation we would have chosen a palace with a wonderfully decorated royal throne,

People: But you chose a cross.

Officiant: For those whom we would want to have included in the kingdom of God we would have chosen those who look and sound like we do.

People: But you chose the world.

Officiant: For people to show the love and grace extended to us in Jesus Christ we would have chosen somebody else,

People: But you chose each of us. Use us today. Amen.

A prayer from the Moravian Church

Appendix I

Suggested Practices & Guidelines for Social Networking Websites & Other Forms of Digital Communication

The Episcopal Church in CT is grateful for the work and generosity of the Connecticut Conference of United Church of Christ for developing and sharing Internet Safety Guidelines, upon which these guidelines are based.

As an ever increasing number of people use and prefer digital communication over other forms, it is essential that the church be present in this mission field. Social networking sites, on-the-spot communication devices and email can enhance communication, faith sharing and deepen relationship. The following recommended practices and guidelines apply commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries and safe church to the virtual world of digital networking and communication.

Contents

Overview

- Commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries & Safe Church
- General information about digital communications

Recommended practices and guidelines for interactions with children and youth:

- Social networking sites – relationship
- Groups on social networking sites

Recommended practices and guidelines for interactions with adults:

- Social networking sites - relationships

General recommendations for digital communication and contact

- Behavioral covenants
- Video chats, blogs or video blog
- Publishing/posting content online
- Use of email or texting (Includes Twitter)

+ + +

Commonly Accepted Principles of Healthy Boundaries and Safe Church

- Adults have more power than children and youth.
- Clergy have more power than people with whom they have a pastoral relationship.
- The mutuality of friendship cannot exist when there is a disparity of power.
- Two unrelated adults must be able to maintain visual contact with each other any time they engage in ministry with children or youth.

General Information about Digital Communications

- All communication sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes or posts, etc.) is NOT CONFIDENTIAL and may be shared or reposted to others.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent, as a window in the door provides transparency in the physical world.

- 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/exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

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Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth:

Social Networking Sites-Relationships

1. Adults who minister to children and youth are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile. Individual personal profiles are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Adults should not submit **“friend” requests to minors or youth.** 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 level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.**
2. If an adult chooses to accept friend requests from minors or youth who are associated with their community of faith, other adult leaders must have full access **to all aspects of that adult’s profile and correspondence.**
3. Adults who want to connect via a social networking website with youth to whom they minister are strongly encouraged to set up a closed group account that youth may join. **Youth requesting to “friend” an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be accepted as a friend on an adult’s personal profile account.** The purpose of these two separate accounts/profiles is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with youth and real family, friends and colleagues.
4. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or the Department of Children and Families (DCF). If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DCF and/or police. The DCF hotline is 1-800-842-2288.

Skype and FaceTime

- As with all events and ministries for children and youth, there shall be at least two unrelated adults present when communicating with children or youth via Skype, FaceTime, etc.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth:

Groups on Social Networking Sites

1. **Closed groups, but not “hidden” groups, should be used for youth groups (J2A, Rite 13, Confirmation, pilgrimage, mission trips, etc.).**
2. Groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators.
3. Invitations to youth to join the group should be made by youth administrators, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite him/her to join the group.
4. Behavioral covenants should be created to govern what content is appropriate and inappropriate for an online youth group.
5. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or DCF. If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DCF and/or police.
6. Inappropriate material that does not raise suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should immediately be removed from the site.
7. Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established behavioral covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by adult youth leaders and parents.
8. Social networking groups for youth should be open to parents of current members.
9. Parents should be informed that the content of youth pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are NOT within the purview of adult youth leaders.
10. Adult leaders of youth groups and former youth members who, due to departure, **removal from position, or are no longer eligible because they “aged-out”** of a program should be immediately removed from digital communication with youth groups via social networking sites, list serves, etc.

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Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Adults:

Social Networking Sites-Relationship

1. Clergy are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.
2. Individual personal profiles of clergy are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. **Clergy should not submit “friend” requests to parishioners and others to whom they minister.** The disparity of power may not give the other person the ability to decline such request.

3. Clergy who want to connect via a social networking website with parishioners are strongly encouraged to set up a group account that all parishioners may join. The purpose of having a personal profile and parish group is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with parishioners and real family, friends and colleagues.
4. Clergy should consider the impact of declining a “friend” request from parishioners. These encounters may create a tension in “real world” relationships. Clergy can direct “friend” requests from parishioners to the parish’s group page.
5. Clergy who work directly with youth are encouraged to establish church sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members.
6. When a cleric’s ministry at a parish or other ministry setting ends, the cleric should remove parishioners as “friends” or contacts in all forms of digital communications.

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Recommendations for digital communications and content

Recommendations for Behavioral Covenants

1. Covenants should acknowledge that materials posted on Church Sponsored sites (and/or group pages) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL.
2. Covenants should acknowledge that content deemed inappropriate will be removed from the site or group page.
3. Covenants for communities of faith should address the following issues:
 - Appropriate language
 - Eligibility of membership to join a social networking group. Things to consider include whether you have to be a member of a parish or youth group and whether there are age requirements/restrictions for participation for youth groups.
 - Loss of eligibility of membership and removal from the social networking group. Consider how and when members will be removed from the group due to moving away, leaving the faith community, becoming too old for youth group, clergy leaving to minister to another parish or exclusion from ministry positions for other reasons.
 - Who, how and when may photos be tagged (members identified by name; for example, individuals may tag themselves in photos but should not tag others).
 - Appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior.
 - Compliance with mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse.

Recommendations for Video Chats, Blogs or Video Blogs

1. Adults should refrain from initiating video chats with youth.
2. Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing/state of dress, etc.
3. All transcripts of on-line text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.
4. All clergy and adults engaged in ministry with youth should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth. Your voice is often considered the voice of the church.

Recommendations for Publishing/Posting Content Online

1. Congregations must inform participants when they are being videoed because church buildings are not considered public space.
2. Any faith community that distributes video of its worship services or activities on the web or via other broadcast media **MUST** post signs that indicate the service will be broadcast.
3. All communities of faith should take care to secure signed Media Release forms from adults and guardians of minor children who will or may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
4. Photos that are published on church sponsored sites should not include name or contact information for minor children or youth.

Recommendations for Use of Email or Texting (Includes Twitter)

1. Email can be an appropriate and effective means of communicating basic factual information such as the time of an event, agenda for a meeting, text of a document, etc.
2. Email is not an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or require extensive conversation.
3. If an email message is longer than a couple of sentences, then the matter might more properly be addressed via live conversation.
4. Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted in an email.
5. All email users should take a moment to consider the ramifications of their message before clicking on the "send" or "reply to all" button.

Appendix II

Case Studies

Case Study #1 - Adult

Three years ago Rev. Joe began serving as a part-time rector for a parish that could no longer afford a full-time rector. The former full-time rector retired five years earlier, after having served as rector for 26 years. For years the parish had been struggling financially, often withdrawing significant funds from their endowment to be able to afford their full-time rector. When the former rector vacated the rectory, the parish sold the rectory so that the proceeds could be invested and used to provide the housing allowance for their next priest. The parish was relieved to finally find Rev. Joe, who was happy with a part-time position and owned his own home in the next town.

One night, the newly elected senior warden, Ann, received a call from Joe who was at the local police station. He was intoxicated and had been pulled over for erratic driving. A breathalyzer revealed his blood-alcohol level to be five times the legal limit. Ann and her husband brought Joe home to sleep it off on their couch.

Ann consulted with the previous senior warden and friend, Marie, who disclosed she had received two similar calls during her tenure as senior warden. Marie overlooked these incidents as Joe had begun negotiating divorce proceedings shortly after his arrival at the parish.

In the course of their conversation, Marie said that she was surprised that Joe hadn't called her from the police station because she and Joe were in a romantic relationship. They were deeply in love. Marie told Ann about their dates at expensive restaurants that always included cocktails and the "best champagne".

Ann also learned from Marie that with all of the extra responsibilities the lay leaders were burdened with during the interim period, they had not invested the proceeds from the sale of the rectory or established a separate fund from which to draw a housing allowance. The proceeds from the sale were still in the parish checking account. As Marie pointed out **"they did the best they could and of course, they were volunteers after all!"**

Currently, when the parish treasurer/bookkeeper goes on vacation, Rev. Joe fills in to pay the bills.

Discussion Questions:

1. What boundaries have been violated?
2. What could/should the current senior warden do now?
3. If you saw warning signs in your parish, what would you do? Who would you talk to?
4. Who is affected by clergy misconduct?

Case Study #2 - Youth

A parish youth group had been preparing and fundraising for the last three years to go on a mission trip to repair homes along the Mississippi River. There were ten youth and three adult chaperones committed to go. Four days before they were scheduled to depart, Gary, the only male chaperone and overall coordinator of the trip, had fallen ill and was unable to travel. Gary immediately sent a message to all parish members seeking to find another male chaperone. He was very pleased when, within an hour, Alan responded **indicating he would be happy to travel with the youth. Alan was retired and didn't have any plans that couldn't easily be rearranged. Alan had begun attending the parish five months earlier and was excited to begin working with the youth.** The church rented a 15-passenger van, registered all three adults to drive it, and set out on their way to Mississippi.

Each day the youth and chaperones traveled to a different work site to do needed improvements to homes. Alan enjoyed the work and though he was retired, was young at heart and really cared about the teens. Toward the end of the week, one of the teens, Lisa, realized that she left her eyeglasses at a previous worksite. Alan was the driver that afternoon and had the keys so he took Lisa back to the site to find them. Even though the residents of the home were at work during the day, they left a key under the mat for the group to get in should they need to use the bathroom or clean up. After an hour of searching, Lisa found her glasses on the living room floor. They must have fallen out of her pocket and they had been stepped on and bent. Lisa was upset so Alan took her right to the local optical center and had them repaired. They rejoined the rest of the group three hours after they left. During this time Lisa and Alan got to know each other better. They **exchanged phone numbers and Lisa accepted Alan's friend request on Facebook; this way they could keep in touch after the trip.**

Discussion Questions:

1. What boundaries/rules were violated by Gary and Alan?
2. What scenarios might have happened because of these violations?
3. What should Gary or the chaperones do now?
4. Who is affected by lay misconduct?

Case Study #3 - Child

Little Melissa is a first grader in Mrs. Allen's Godly Play class at St. Kelp's by the Sea Church. She is dropped off every Sunday by her mom, a single parent who uses the time to do her weekly grocery shopping. St. Kelp's holds their Christian Formation hour following their second Sunday morning service every week and Melissa's mom generally picks up Melissa promptly when her class is done.

One Sunday, Melissa's mom was not back at the end of class. Mrs. Allen waited with Melissa in the classroom where parents came to pick up their children, which was the parish policy. By the time 30 minutes had passed, all of the other children had been picked up and only a handful of people remained in the building for a committee meeting that had just begun in another classroom down the hall.

Mrs. Allen was also a member of the committee and needed to attend the meeting. She was concerned and tried to call Melissa's mother but was not able to reach her. Since parents were expected to pick up their children in their classrooms, Mrs. Allen told Melissa that she should stay there and color while she waited for her mother to come. Mrs. Allen then went to the committee meeting. The door to the building remained unlocked so that Melissa's mother would be able to come in to get her.

Reflection Questions:

1. Which boundaries and/or safe church policies did Mrs. Allen violate?
2. What could/should other committee members do?

Case Study #4 – Mentor for Youth

Joan was honored to have been asked to be a mentor for Hilary, a 16-year-old confirmation student at her parish. Joan was a lifelong member of the parish and her own children had grown up and were confirmed there. She welcomed the chance to be a part of Hilary's confirmation preparation.

After the initial informational meeting for the confirmands, mentors and parents, Joan was very excited and began thinking about what they might do for the one-on-one pieces of the mentoring. She and Hilary decided that they would jot down some ideas and at their first "get to know each other" meeting they would talk about what they each came up with and go from there. Since Joan was retired, it worked best for Joan and Hilary to meet during the week after school. Joan lived near the school, so for their first meeting she picked Hilary up at school and they went to a coffee shop in town to talk.

They met once a month, when they discussed the Gospel of Mark (one of the assigned activities for the mentors & mentees to do together) and then spent time just talking and getting to know each other. Each month Joan picked Hilary up after school and they went to the coffee shop for conversation. During one of their conversations, Joan learned that Hilary loved Coach bags so she decided that would be a nice confirmation gift.

Reflection Questions:

1. Which boundaries and/or safe church policies did Joan violate?
2. What could/should these other people do?
 - ❖ Hilary's parents
 - ❖ Other mentors
 - ❖ Director of the program
 - ❖ Any parishioner who is aware of this situation

Case Study #5 – Elder Caregiver

Within the last year, Nancy, a 62-year-old married woman, has begun caring for her 84-year-old mother, who had a sudden stroke. The stroke left Nancy's mom quite impaired. Nancy's mom is incontinent and needs help with all daily functions such as dressing, eating and bathing. She has greatly impaired speech.

Prior to her mother's stroke, Nancy spent 20 hours a week serving as the bookkeeper for her husband's business. They have no children and always worked alongside each other as partners during their 34 years of marriage. They enjoyed traveling together. Nancy played bridge each week and was active in a women's Bible study group at church.

Now, Nancy spends all her time at home caring for her mom. She bathes, dresses and feeds her mom each morning. The remainder of the day is spent taking her mom to appointments, trying to catch up on bookkeeping, changing her mother's bedding, which is often soiled during the night, and giving her mom medications, which require administration five times a day.

Nancy is proud and capable. She assures everyone who asks that she is "doing just fine." However, Nancy is aware that out of frustration, she has begun to raise her voice and yell at her mom. She began raising her voice when her mom's incontinence would "get ahead of her" especially at night when her mother would call her for assistance but Nancy didn't get there in time to assist her. Nancy gets about 2 consecutive hours of sleep a night.

Nancy is also aware that she often is "rough" as she applies her mother's make-up by grabbing her chin, sharply moving her head and verbally scolding her mother for not sitting still enough. On two occasions when hurrying to get her mother ready for an appointment, Nancy hit her mother with her hand.

Reflection questions:

1. What could a parish do to support Nancy's mother?
2. What could a parish do to support Nancy?

Appendix III

Internet Resources to Help Keep Vulnerable Populations Safe

- Diocesan Website contains an array of information including updated safe church policies and practices as well as the Safe Church training schedule.
www.episcopalct.org
- State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families website contains a lot of useful information, including detailed information about the reporting of suspected abuse and neglect. www.state.ct.us/dcf
- State of Connecticut Department of Social Services - Programs
<http://www.ct.gov/dss/cwp/view.asp?a=2345&O=304924&dssNav=1>
- State of Connecticut Department of Social Services – Programs for Elders
<http://www.ct.gov/dss/cwp/view.asp?a=2345&O=30492&dssNav=1>
- Internet safety resources for parents and teens:
 - ~ www.bewebaware.ca – *Be Web Aware*
 - ~ www.microsoft.com/security/family-safety/blogging.aspx
- Resources for integrating offenders into the life of a parish, please contact Robin Hammeal-Urban, Canon for Mission Integrity & Training at rurban@episcopalct.org or 203-639-3501, ext. 122.