

# Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth in the Church of Our Redeemer

Approved by Vestry, September 21, 2022

Adapted from [Model Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth](#), The Episcopal Church, 2018

*\*Note: When accessing this document in Microsoft Word format on a computer, hold CTRL (or ⌘ command for Apple Computers) and click on the titles for direct links to the corresponding section.*

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## I. THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld the Word’s glory, glory as of the only Child from God.”

— John 1:14 (*An Inclusive Language Lectionary*)

**God expressed the fullness of humanity in Jesus of Nazareth, whom we worship as the Word made flesh. To be human is to live with God and the whole of creation in the fullness of freedom and the challenge of responsibility. The pattern of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection resonates unreservedly with God’s call to perfect freedom and responsibility.**

**In baptism, God, speaking through the Church, claims us in Christ. We become, in Christ, the community of God’s final purpose: justice and peace, love and plenty for the whole creation. This new community lives in Eucharistic fellowship with God and Creation, as a sign and instrument of God’s reconciling purpose in the world.**

**The Church is called to embody and advance God’s mission. Ministry is the vocation of the whole community: laypersons, deacons, priests, and bishops who together represent Christ and the Church in the world.**

**The obligation to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being is binding for all the baptized. The authority with which *leaders* — ordained persons and adults who minister with minors (*children and youth*), and youth in leadership roles — are entrusted, creates an inherent power imbalance in the *pastoral relationship*. This power imbalance derives from the leadership role and, in the case of clergy, the symbolic authority of an ordained person. Christian leadership is intended to provide occasions for guidance and grace, and its abuse is always and unequivocally wrong.**

**Ministry involves a necessary tension between a Gospel-based integrity and a Gospel-based intimacy as modeled by the life of Christ. A rigid adherence to a system of rules leads to an unproductive legalism. Yet, without the framework of the law, the intimate relationships into which Christ calls us risk distortion and harm. All the people of God are called to minister attentively within this tension. These policies are intended to provide a pattern for attentive practice of ministry.**

**This document is a statement for the Church of Our Redeemer, adapted from a model policy developed by The Episcopal Church and further adapted by the Diocese of Massachusetts, setting forth expectations for its leaders in their relationships with children and youth. The purpose of these policies is to foster the highest standards of behavior in ministry settings. The document includes:**

- **Safe Church Training Protocols** ([Appendix A](#)), which explains the level of safe church training required before engaging in ministry with children and youth;
- A description of requisite training that is specialized and tailored to ministry role and function;
- Behavioral standards designed to ensure that children and youth and all who engage in ministry with them are treated with dignity and respect in all settings;
- **Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications** ([Appendix B](#)); and
- **Protocols for Public Records Checks and Screening** ([Appendix C](#)) which explains the level of screening required before engaging in ministry with children and youth.

## II. EXPECTATIONS AND LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

This policy sets forth statements of general expectations and guidelines of behavior for ordained and lay people in the church when engaged in ministry with children and youth. This policy is mandated for all such activities sponsored by the Church of Our Redeemer. The purpose of these policies is to create safe and welcoming space for all children and youth in our communities and those engaged in ministry with children and youth and to prevent sexual abuse.

This policy presents best practices for creating such safe space. Circumstances for particular events may make some of these best practices difficult to implement or even unworkable. As a result, additions or revisions may be made in particular circumstances so long as they meet or exceed the requirements of this policy. This requires that leadership understand this policy thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments about particular circumstances. Any such additions or revisions must be submitted in writing for the approval of the *Rector and Wardens*. No provisions may be omitted from a policy adapted for a particular circumstance.

The *Rector and Vestry* and all leaders should understand these policies and all requirements thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments, and should consult with the *Rector or Wardens* when unanticipated situations arise.

*No policy can foresee every possible circumstance to which it may be applied. Whenever applicable, questions of civil, criminal, and/or ecclesiastical discipline and employment offenses should be addressed with the relevant authorities immediately. Please contact the Office of the Bishop for consultation and resources if assistance is needed.*

### III. DEFINITIONS

*NOTE: These definitions reflect our understanding of terms describing gender identity and sexuality, which are evolving.*

**Adult:** Anyone who is 18 years or older and not in high school (*see footnote to youth on page 6*).

**Bullying:** Behavior that intimidates, humiliates, offends, degrades, or harms another person, whether verbal, psychological, social, physical, or otherwise.

**Child:** Anyone under the age of 12 years (*see footnote to youth on page 6*).

**Child Protective Services:** A social services program provided by state and local governments serving children and their families who are in need of assistance. Child Protective Services receive and investigate reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

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

**Gender Non-Binary:** An umbrella term for people who identify their gender as neither male nor female. These people might identify as both ("bigender"), neither ("agender"), a mix between the two ("genderfluid"), or engage with gender categories in a range of creative and complex ways ("genderqueer"). This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

**Intake Officer:** The person(s) designated by each diocese to receive information regarding an offense for which a member of the clergy may be held accountable under *Title IV of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church*, which sets out the disciplinary process for clergy. Anyone may contact an Intake Officer to report concerns.

**Leader:** A person, adult or youth, who, for the benefit of another, engages in ministry without responsibility for oversight of others engaged in that same ministry. Examples include Sunday school teachers, camp counselors, and program team.

**LGBTQ+:** An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others. It refers to people whose gender identities vary from their gender or sex assigned at birth, or whose sexual orientations differ from the heterosexual majority. The "+" is an effort to include additional gender identities. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

**Mandated Reporter:** A person who is required by state law to report reasonable suspicions of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of vulnerable populations to the appropriate state agency. State laws vary greatly. It is imperative to know the requirements of applicable state laws. In Massachusetts, state law mandates that Members of the Clergy,

including ordained or licensed leaders of any church or religious body, persons performing official duties on behalf of a church or religious body, or persons employed by a religious body to supervise, educate, coach, train or counsel a child on a regular basis report suspected abuse of children and/or youth to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Individuals who are not mandated to report suspicion of abuse may make a report to DCF as well, even though not legally required to do so. See the DCF's *Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting: A Guide for Mandated Reporters* [here](#).

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

**Organizations:** All institutions for which the Diocese or congregations have legal or fiduciary responsibility (examples: diocesan departments, commissions, conference & retreat centers, adult day care centers, retirement communities, religious orders, congregations, schools, etc.).

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

**Pastoral Relationship:** Any relationship (1) between a Member of the Clergy and any person to whom the Member of the Clergy provides or has provided counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction or spiritual guidance, or from whom such Member of the Clergy has received information within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent, or (2) between a lay minister and any person to whom the lay minister is offering prayer, ministry, and/or any person from whom the lay minister has received sensitive, personal, or confidential information in the course of offering ministry.

**Programs:** Official activities and programs sponsored by The Episcopal Church and its provinces, dioceses, and congregations (examples include: The Episcopal Youth Event, Provincial Youth Events, Happening, Teens Encounter Christ, pilgrimages, mission experiences, New Beginnings, camp programs, Acolyte Festival, etc.).

**Public Records Check:** A search of documents and data available to the public including criminal and civil court records, credit reports, and driving records from the department of motor vehicles. Typically, such searches are conducted by a third party with expertise in this area.

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

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

**Sexual misconduct:** A broad term encompassing any behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or capacity for consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same or different gender.

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

**Title IV:** A section of the *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church* pertaining to clergy professional standards, accountability and ecclesiastical discipline.

**Transgender:** An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with the gender or sex assigned to them at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

**Training:** Organized activity designed to provide information and/or instructions to strengthen and enhance the recipient's understanding, capacity, and exercise of ministry.

- **Universal Training:** A standard of training that will foster a culture of safety and inclusion for all people that includes a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries. This training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant.
- **Specialized Training:** A standard of additional training that equips people who participate in or have oversight responsibility for ministries. In addition to Universal Training, a person will have access to training that is specialized and tailored to their role and ministry function.

**Youth:** Anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, and still in high school.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ages established in accordance with generally accepted definitions in the United States. These ages may vary across the wider Episcopal Church.

## IV. APPLICATION AND SCREENING

The Church of Our Redeemer is required to screen and train all persons according to the standards in the *Safe Church Training Protocols (Appendix A)* and *Public Records Checks and Screening Protocols (Appendix C)*. For some positions, screening consists only of a Public Records Check. For other positions there are additional screening requirements of a written application, interview, and reference verification.

### A. Public Records Checks

- The Church of Our Redeemer shall conduct public records checks according to the standards in the *Public Records Checks and Screening Protocols*. Such checks must be completed before the employee or volunteer begins interacting with children and youth;
- Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records and sex offender registries;
- A Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) records check is needed if transporting children and youth as part of, or an extension of, ministry of the Church of Our Redeemer or for a congregation-sponsored event;
- A credit check is required with check signing authority; and
- Public records checks must be updated at least every *three* years.
- See **Appendix C for Protocols for Public Records Checks and Screening.**

### B. Additional Screening Requirements

Written application, interview, and reference verification are required before serving in certain roles and ministries as specified in the *Public Records Checks and Screening Protocols (Appendix C)*. Where required, these components are generally conducted in the following order:

- Submission of a completed written application to serve in a specified role with a clearly defined, written “job description.” The application includes verifiable personal information;
- Personal interview;
- Reference verification conducted by the Church of Our Redeemer to verify personal information and check references listed in the application (people who know but are not related to the applicant); and
- Maintenance of these records as described below.

Potential Leaders or Supervisors must be known and active in the Church of Our Redeemer for at least six months before engaging in ministry with children and youth.

The Church of Our Redeemer must keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the congregation’s office. This includes a signature by each applicant verifying receipt of a copy of this policy, including any special procedures or variations approved for particular circumstances.



## V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Training shall be appropriate to each person's function according to the *Safe Church Training Protocols* ([Appendix A](#)).

All Leaders shall have Universal Training that fosters a culture of safety and inclusion for all people and covers a broad overview of issues of vulnerability, power, and healthy boundaries. Universal Training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant. All members of The Episcopal Church shall have access to this training.

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

**Depending on role and responsibility, Specialized Training should include:**

- Prevention, identification, and response to all forms of abuse and neglect;
- Vulnerability within the pastoral relationship;
- An introduction to gender non-binary;
- The needs of LGBTQ+ children and youth;
- The ways that children and youth can engage in self-advocacy; and
- The needs of differently-abled children and youth.

Certification of training shall be renewed every three years.

The Church of Our Redeemer shall keep records sufficient to evidence compliance with this policy.

## VI. MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS

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

All people who minister to children and youth must have ongoing supervision. Ongoing supervision should consist of regular check-ins by the Supervisor who may be a Member of the Clergy or a lay team leader. Such supervision shall review the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry with the person engaged in the ministry. Each person engaged in such ministry should know who supervises their ministry and how to contact the Supervisor at all times.

The Church of Our Redeemer shall ensure that all people who minister to children and youth receive prior training as to the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry.

The Church of Our Redeemer shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons with their contact information approved to minister to children and youth. This list shall be kept in the congregation's office.

### A. Number of Adults Required

There shall be at least two adults (both at least two years older than the eldest participant) present at ministry settings and events designed for children and youth. Ideally, these adults shall be unrelated to each other. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth, that adult shall report those circumstances to the Supervisor as soon as possible.

Only one adult may be sufficient in well-monitored, visually accessible program space on the congregation's property, provided that another adult can maintain visual contact with the adult program leader. This can be accomplished by designating an individual to conduct frequent random checks of spaces throughout the building(s). These exceptional circumstances must be specifically described in a written document and approved by the *Rector and Vestry*. See also sections on ***Overnight Programs*** ([Section VI, I](#)) and ***Transportation*** ([Section VI, J](#)).

### B. Creating Safe Space for Children and Youth

To create a safe space, it is necessary to anticipate and avoid circumstances in which children and youth are exposed to inappropriate consumables, materials, unmonitored adult contact, or unsupervised peer contact.

For example:

- **Alcoholic beverages.** Alcohol (sacramental or otherwise) shall not be stored in publicly accessible areas.

- **Computers and electronic devices.** Children and youth shall have adequate supervision when using electronic devices belonging to the Church of Our Redeemer or other organizations. Devices shall have adequate password protection. Each user shall have their own account and password. See ***Diocesan Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications*** ([Appendix B](#)).
- **Persons with keys and access to locked spaces.** *Anyone with keys or electronic access* to the congregation's buildings shall meet all the requirements for screening and training according to the ***Safe Church Training Protocols*** ([Appendix A](#)) and ***Public Records Checks and Screening Protocols*** ([Appendix C](#)).
- **Unused spaces.** Spaces not in use should not be readily accessible. The Supervisor shall determine how best to meet this standard.

### C. Spaces in Our Redeemer for Children & Youth Events

- Meetings should be held in designated meeting spaces, as communicated to the parents and clergy and in parish communications. If something necessitates moving rooms, the leader will communicate this by putting a sign on the door (e.g. "We've moved to the Conference Room tonight!") or by texting/emailing the parents (e.g. "We've had to move to the Great Hall because it started raining, find us there").

- Meetings should not be held off church premises without prior notification (before leaving the church) of clergy AND written permission of parents/guardians, including written over text message. See section on off-site events for more details.

- Meeting spaces shall always have an open door OR interior window. Meetings shall not be held in spaces where this is not possible.

- Parents and guardians are welcome to stop in to visit classes/meetings at unscheduled times.

### D. Movement between Spaces at Church, Picking Up, Dropping Off: Responsibilities of Parents & Guardians

- If a child is dropped off for a church activity a parent or guardian should confirm that the supervising adults for the activity are present before departing the church. No child/youth should be left alone with an adult who is not their parent/guardian.

- Children who are attending the children's Christian Formation programs (Atrium and Sunday School) after the church service will leave the service during their dismissal and be accompanied by the teachers of their classes. Once children are dismissed from the service, teachers assume responsibility for the children until the end of class. Parents are responsible for promptly picking up their children at their classroom after class.

- Youth members meeting directly after church are responsible to go from the service to their meeting in a timely manner. Youth not attending Christian Formation class are the responsibility of their parent or guardian.

- Children and youth should be accompanied by a parent or guardian when they come to church services. Parents are responsible for their children during the service.

- Youth group typically meets on Sunday evening. Members who arrive early should wait outside the church until two adults are ready to welcome them inside. This should be communicated in the youth group covenant.

- Youth members should be picked up promptly at the end of the meeting by a parent/guardian or another adult designated in writing (including text) to the Church of Our Redeemer by the parent or guardian. Youth Group leaders are responsible for communicating start and end times to parents and guardians.

-If youth (under 18) are picking each other up after a church event, the leader must know this in advance (by text, phone call, email).

-Adult leaders or chaperones may not drive children or youth unless given express written permission on file with Church of Our Redeemer, by the child's/youth's parent/guardian, and with the appropriate background checks (see section above).

### **E. One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth**

When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth, another unrelated adult is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation.

Examples include:

- Planned or unplanned on-site conversations can take place in a public location, away from where others can hear but in view of other adults.
- Planned off-site conversations/meetings can take place in a public place (such as a coffee shop or restaurant) in view of other adults. A Responsible Person shall be informed about the appointment or plans in advance.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation because of mandatory reporting laws.

Any impulsive, secluded or secretive activity, online or in person with children or youth, may foster a high-risk situation, and is therefore to be avoided.

See *Diocesan Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications* ([Appendix B](#)).

### **F. Basic Needs**

No one is to be deprived of the basic human needs of food, drinking water, shelter, sleep, access to restrooms, safety, and clothing at any event.

Exceptions may be made for programs intended to teach children or youth about poverty, need, and hunger, such as an intentional fasting program. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by fasting or missing sleep. Participants who wish to withdraw or who are unable to complete the program must have their basic needs met immediately.

## **G. Inclusiveness**

No one shall be denied rights, status or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class. To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be accessible.

The Episcopal Church seeks to support all children and youth by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary children or youth who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child or youth's ability to keep their transgender status confidential. They should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity.

Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned to the use of a single facility).

Adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than the youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided. See section on ***Overnight Programs*** ([Section VI, I](#)).

## **H. Violence and Weapons**

- No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
- Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.
- Children and youth shall not have weapons of any kind at any event or program for children or youth. Exceptions to this restriction may be made for camp programs or other specific programs with prior approval.
- Report suspected violations immediately. See ***Suspected Violations of this Policy*** ([Section VII, B](#)).

## **I. Behavioral Standards for Adults in Ministry with Children or Youth**

Adults who work with children and youth are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships that children and youth deserve in all settings. Interactions should meet all requirements outlined above, and adults should be discouraged from initiating a private relationship with any unrelated child or youth away from sanctioned activities of the congregation.

### **DOs**

Adults are encouraged to:

- Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include: daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;
- Spend time with and listen to children and youth, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;
- Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include:
  - high fives and fist bumps;
  - hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer;
  - brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms;
  - “laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision;
  - brief hugs and arms around shoulders; and
- Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior.

### **DON'Ts**

Adults shall not under any circumstances:

- Provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, marijuana (even though consumption is legal in some cases in Massachusetts), illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- Consume non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior;
- Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth; or

- Apart from planned pre-approved educational programs, discuss their own sexual activities, fantasies, or their own use or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children or youth.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall take steps as outlined in *Responding to Concerns* ([Section VII](#)).

## **J. Behavior Standards for Children and Youth participating in Our Redeemer programs**

- Children and youth participating in an overnight activity at the church must stay in the designated areas of the church and should not travel between designated spaces alone. These should be clearly marked and communicated, and leaders should be sure to lock other spaces as possible.

- Any young person who does not abide by the agreed upon rules for the overnight will be given one warning. After that warning, if there is another transgression, the parent/guardian of the child/youth will be called to pick their child/youth up promptly. This shall be outlined in the waiver for the event.

-Youth group members will agree upon the rules and guidelines for meetings. All members will sign the Covenant and any members who break the Covenant will be given 1 (one) warning and then will be asked to leave a meeting. In the event that a youth group member is asked to leave a meeting, parents/guardians will be called to pick the youth member promptly.

## **K. Communication Standards & Practices for Our Redeemer's Children & Youth Leaders**

See section below for more information on social media and communication standards.

- In an emergency during class, teachers will use the information provided on the registration form to contact the child's parents or their alternate. Parents are responsible for providing current information each year, and for notifying teachers of any changes to their contact information during the year. Teachers are responsible for having this information ready at hand, and the Assistant Rector or other Supervisor is responsible for getting the teachers this information each year or as it is updated.

- Leaders can utilize e-mail as a form of communication for official business related to the group, but they should not e-mail individual youth directly without including a second adult on the e-mail message.

-Leaders can instigate a group chat thread among youth if there are two adult leaders (meeting all above requirements) who are part of it. Secondary apps like Remind can be used for chat threads in the same way. Parents should be told about these threads and can ask that their child have an alternate way of contacting the group (like email or Remind) if they do not want them to be part of it.

-If leaders are connected to children and teens in social media or phones, they should not contact them or send messages privately (e.g. Facebook messages, texts). If a young person sends a message to them like this, the adult may reply while including a second COR leader, and they should let the clergy know. See below for more information on messages and social media.

-Leaders should not request to “friend” or add youth and children on social media. If young people do “friend” the leader and the leader decides to accept, they shall accept all such youth friend requests, not select only certain youth. (Please refer to training on Power & Relationships for more about this dynamic.)

## **L. Special Considerations for Off-Site Programming**

Off-site programs, trips, and events are a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional development of children and youth. They also present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site.

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

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

### **1. Prior Approvals**

- Prior approval by the *Rector and Wardens* is required, and that approval shall be reflected in writing.
- Written parental approval is required prior to viewing any movie, whether off-site or on-site, rated “PG-13” or above, or participating in any conversation or program containing sexually explicit or violent content.
- These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, hosting such events as cook outs, pool parties, progressive dinners, etc.

### **2. Registration, Waiver, and Release Forms**

- All children, youth, and adults shall complete and sign a registration form and a waiver and release form before participating in any programs of the congregation. Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical and other sensitive information in the forms. Such forms can encompass a program year.
  - There must be a parent/guardian’s signature on all release and waiver forms for minors. Digital signatures are legally acceptable in Massachusetts.



- Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site or online. Such forms shall be saved for a minimum of ten years or until the participant attains the age of 25, whichever is greater.
- Permission slips shall be provided for each off-site event and shall be signed by the parent/guardian.
- Prior permission for a minor to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required from a parent/guardian.

### 3. **First Aid and Medications**

- Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with children and youth.
- A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.
- A record must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant. This record shall include the participant's name, the date and time of service, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication, dosage, and/or treatment given.
- All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and the Responsible Person. Exceptions may include inhalers, epi-pens, and birth-control pills.
- Only the Responsible Person, or their adult designee, shall administer medications.

### 4. **Supervision**

- At any gathering of children or youth, there shall be at least two unrelated adults with one being age 25 or older, preferably reflecting the sex and gender identity of the participants.
- Minimum ratios of adult to child/youth shall be in accordance with American Camp Association (ACA) [guidelines](#) as follows:
  - 5 years & younger — 1 adult for each 5 overnight-participants and 1 adult for each 6 day-participants
  - 6–8 years — 1:6 for overnight, and 1:8 for day
  - 9–14 years — 1:8 for overnight and 1:10 for day
  - 15–18 years — 1:10 for overnight and 1:12 for day
- Additional adults can provide skills, mentorship, support, encouragement, spiritual guidance, and joy.
- When you have new leaders-in-training, the leadership teams should also have a reasonable number of experienced adult leaders to provide support.

### 5. **Insurance**

All trips to off-site destinations must have adequate insurance in case of emergency. Coverage requirements for a specific event shall be coordinated with the congregation's insurance provider.

## **M. Overnight Programs**

In overnight programming, particular attention will be given to historically excluded or unrecognized people, such as LGBTQ+ and differently-abled individuals. In a situation of unequal power and safety, preferences of these individuals merit additional consideration, accommodation, and action to ensure:

- Participant privacy;
- Maximization of social integration of all participants;
- Minimization of stigmatization of any participants;
- Equal opportunity to participate; and
- Safety of all participants.

Other guidelines for overnight programs:

- The safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires attention to numerous factors, including, but not limited to: age, sex, gender identity and expression, and privacy. Adults should have separate showers or separate times for showers.
- Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
  - No bed, cot, or sleeping bag shall have more than one person sleeping in it.
  - Supervision by two unrelated adults is required in any space where one or more youth are sleeping.
  - It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
- Participants shall have access to three substantial meals each full day and access to sufficient water.
- Participants shall be given the opportunity for at least seven hours of sleep each 24-hour period, except for programs where parental/guardian permission is given to miss sleep. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by missing sleep.
- Participants shall have some time set aside each day for rest or free time.

Best practice guidelines for hotel stays:

- One child or youth per bed, including cots, pullouts or hideabeds, and rollaway beds;
- At least 2 children or 2 youth in each room.
- Adult supervisors or chaperones have rooms on the same floor, scattered among the rooms with children or youth, and at least one adult room is by the

stairs or elevators;

- Adult leader assigns rooms and room occupants;

## **N. Transportation**

- For the health and safety of all participants, the following practices shall be followed: For events that originate and/or terminate at the diocesan, congregation, or organization's facility, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license, a completed volunteer driver information form, and have a satisfactory RMV records check.
- All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for the transportation and safety of their children and/or youth to and from the event. This responsibility includes the transportation of any other passengers in their vehicle.

## **O. Camps and Retreat Centers**

All camps, camping programs, and retreat centers of the diocese shall follow the guidelines for off-site programming established in this policy. In addition, camps should aim to follow American Camp Association [standards](#) to the best of the camp's ability.

## **P. Travel**

Travel with children and youth presents amazing opportunities for participants to experience the church and the world on a larger scale with vastly different perspectives of faith communities and their contexts. It also presents challenges to normal safety protocols and opportunities for creativity if managed well. The following policies will help groups prepare for a variety of potential scenarios, as well as for domestic and international travel.

### **1. Adult Leaders and Chaperones**

- Minimum ratios of adult to youth need to be greater due to the possibility of leaving an adult behind with a participant in the event of a medical emergency.
  - 9-14 years — 1:5
  - 15-18 years — 1:7
- **Regardless of group size, no group should travel with fewer than three adult chaperones.**
- **One adult, minimum age 25, should serve as the travel administrator who is responsible for all aspects of the trip, including carrying all necessary documentation, contacts, and forms including:**
  - **medical releases;**
  - **community covenant;**
  - **emergency contacts;**

- **itineraries; and**
- **cash and/or credit card capacity to address emergencies.**
- **It is a best practice that, one adult, minimum age 25, should hold a current medical certification to manage administration of necessary and permissible medications, administer immediate and necessary first aid, and triage medical situations to determine if care of an individual needs to be taken to a higher level of care. When this is not possible, one person should be designated to supervise the administration of medications as instructed on medical release forms, and a clinic near your destination should be identified ahead of time in order to respond to health emergencies as rapidly as possible.**
- **Acceptable medical certifications include:**
  - **Wilderness Medical Response**
  - **Outdoor Emergency Care**
  - **Emergency Medical Technician/Paramedic**
  - **Nurse — RN/LPN/Nurse Practitioner**
  - **Physician's Assistant**
  - **Medical Doctor**
- **Best practice is to designate an adult to serve as back-up to the travel administrator, and as back-up for simple first aid and administration of prescriptions. These could be the same person.**
- **A copy of all documents should be left with an accountable person at the congregation's office. That person should also serve as the local emergency contact person for communications between the traveling group and families at home.**

## **2. Insurance for Travel**

- Short-term trip or supplemental insurance, available through the congregation's insurance provider as an added rider, must be secured at-least one month prior to travel.
- It is recommended that all travelers carry evidence of personal health insurance by virtue of a copy of the actual card provided to the insured person.
- Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.

## **3. International Considerations**

- Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
- Make certain that every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date.

- Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
- Arrange to have at least two cell phones with the group that will have active coverage in your destination(s). Make a back-up plan for communication with your Responsible Person at home.
- A more thorough list of international travel considerations with links to U.S. and global organizations can be found in the [\*Youth in Mission Manual\*](#).

## VII. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

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

Any adult who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place, is strongly encouraged, and all mandated reporters are required to contact the [Massachusetts Department of Children and Families](#) and local law enforcement.

In addition, anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place within a facility or program of the Diocese, or one of its congregations or affiliated organizations, should immediately inform one of more or the following:

- The Bishop Diocesan or the Canon to the Ordinary in the case of the Diocese;
- Member of the Clergy in charge or the senior warden in the case of a congregation;
- The director, head, or other governing officer in the case of other organizations; and/or
- The Intake Officer in case a Member of the Clergy is suspected of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation, or any other form of misconduct.

### B. Suspected Violations of this Policy

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall immediately report the violation to the Responsible Person, the *Rector and Wardens*, and, in the case of a Member of the Clergy, to the Office of the Bishop and an Intake Officer.

If there is a fear that a young person is in immediate danger, Emergency services should be called immediately before attending to other reporting.

If, for any reason, one who is concerned about a violation of this policy does not feel comfortable reporting to the responsible person, the rector or wardens, they are strongly encouraged to contact any of the local resources for response outlined below, or one of the Intake Officers of the Diocese (Ms. Starr Anderson (978-352-2147; [starrkanderson@gmail.com](mailto:starrkanderson@gmail.com)) and The Rev. Thea Keith-Lucas (617-458-1253; [revthea@gmail.com](mailto:revthea@gmail.com)) and The Rev. Ema Rosero-Nordalm: Se habla español (617-921-3490; [erosero@bu.edu](mailto:erosero@bu.edu)) and explain their hesitancy and concerns. These intake officers are practiced in helping reporters negotiate choices.

The person(s) receiving reports of violations of this policy shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected. The *Rector* shall provide appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the Church of Our Redeemer. If the Responsible Person is a lay person, they are responsible to ensure that appropriate pastoral care is provided for all.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies by a Member of the Clergy shall immediately report the violation to the Office of the Bishop and/or the Intake Officer. Anyone can make a report to an Intake Officer.

The Bishop, hearing reports of violations by a Member of the Clergy, shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action, up to and including canonical disciplinary action, as provided by Title IV of the Constitutions and Canons and/or termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the Diocese. In the case of violations by a lay person, the Office of the Bishop shall offer support to the *Rector and Vestry* in providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected.

### **C. Local Resources for Response**

The Diocese shall provide a list of local resources that can give information and assistance to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate this policy. Such resources include:

- The Reverend Dr. Yolanda Rolle, Youth Missioner
- [The Reverend Canon William C. Parnell](#), Canon to the Ordinary
- [The Right Reverend Alan M. Gates](#), Bishop of Massachusetts
- Intake Officers: [Starr Anderson](#), [The Reverend Thea Keith-Lucas](#), and [Ema Rosero-Nordalm](#)
- [Massachusetts Department of Children and Families](#)

## VIII. POLICY ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND AUDIT

### A. The Episcopal Church Adoption and Implementation

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

The Episcopal Church shall also ensure that each diocese adopts a ***Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*** in accordance with this model policy by January 1, 2019.

### B. Diocesan Adoption, Implementation, and Audit

The Diocese of Massachusetts has adopted a ***Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*** that is consistent with and/or exceeds the requirements in this model policy.

The bishop shall inform congregations and other organizations within the diocese of the contents of the diocesan policy, the requirement that each congregation or organization adopt a policy in accordance with the diocesan policy, and the vendor(s) approved to conduct Public Records Checks.

***Safe Church Self-Audit:*** The Diocese of Massachusetts shall review its diocesan policy each year and conduct an audit of congregations and affiliated organizations every three years to ensure compliance with the requirements above.

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

- Existence of diocesan policy that is consistent with and/or exceeds the requirements of The Episcopal Church's model policy;
- Provision of accessible and appropriate training for all those who work with children and youth in accordance with ***Safe Church Training Protocols*** ([Appendix A](#)). Such training shall include, at a minimum, topics identified in The Episcopal Church's model policy;
- Verification that each congregation and/or organization within the Diocese has adopted a policy that is consistent with and/or exceeds the diocesan policy; and
- Verification that each congregation and/or organization has a process to ensure members access training and conduct public record checks.

### C. Congregation and Organization Adoption, Implementation, and Audit

Congregations and organizations must adopt a ***Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*** that is consistent with and/or exceeds the requirements in The Episcopal Church's model policy and the diocesan policy.



Congregations and organizations may adopt site-specific variations from diocesan policies, where permitted by vestries or governing bodies, which shall be described in detail, including the circumstances under which those variations are to be permitted and their rationale. This approval shall be recorded in the minutes of the vestry or governing body.

The ***Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*** shall be posted in an area where activities take place, and shall be given to all adults, guardians, and all paid and unpaid persons who minister to children or youth. These policies shall include the names and phone numbers of the member of the clergy in charge, the senior warden, and a contact person in the bishop's office.

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

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

- **Public records checks, application forms, records of screening and reference verification of paid and unpaid persons;**
- **Records of compliance with Safe Church Training Protocols ([Appendix A](#)) and Public Records Checks and Screening Protocols ([Appendix C](#));**
- **Procedures for responding to concerns and incidents; and**
- **Evidence of compliance with "safe space" requirements.**

## Appendix A: Safe Church Training Protocols

Safe Church training is now offered online through Praesidium. Appendix A-1 outlines the required and suggested modules, depending on the person's role in the congregation. The individual should take the training every three years. In addition to utilizing the on-line modules, we strongly encourage congregations to use the discussion guides offered with several of the modules and convene an annual conversation with all paid employees and volunteers who have taken the on-line training.

Church of Our Redeemer's Parish Administrator serves as the designated administrator for the Praesidium Academy system to provide access to training for employees and volunteers. If you need any assistance with your administrator account, please contact Jennifer Garrett at [jgarrett@diomass.org](mailto:jgarrett@diomass.org). For any other questions, please contact Martha Gardner at [mgardner@diomass.org](mailto:mgardner@diomass.org).

## Appendix B: Diocesan Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications for Children and Youth

Social media shapes the lives of young people and has the potential to empower ministry. Behavior in the digital sphere is never private. Posted content may be used out of context and out of the control of the originating individuals and organizations, putting them at risk. In addition, these powerfully connective tools are subject to the same dynamic of unequal power and potential for abuse that present a risk in all ministry relationships. Churches face the challenge of identifying and proactively addressing areas of potential risk in social media use in the midst of rapidly evolving technology. The Diocese of Massachusetts' recommended practices and guidelines in [Digital Communication & Social Media: Good Use Guidelines for Clergy & Congregations](#), (and here in Appendix B-1) are designed to be a flexible template for developing policies and covenants governing the safe use of social media and digital communication in ministry settings.

### Appendix B1: Good use guidelines for social and other digital communications media

- Commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries and safe church practices apply to all interactions, in person and online, and include:
- Disparity of power precludes mutuality in friendship.
- Adults have more power than children and youth.
- Clergy have more power than people with whom they have a pastoral relationship.

- Mechanisms should be in place to allow transparency and accountability in interactions with children, youth and adults who may be vulnerable.
- Secret deals between adults and children or young people are never permissible.

**Some general considerations:**

- Healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to online as well as in face-to-face interactions. Online interactions need to be as transparent as those conducted in person.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, harassment, bullying or exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the online world as they do in the physical world.
- In social media networks, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In-person friendship can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality and expectations for relationship. Mindfulness of and respect for such distinctions help maintain healthy boundaries.
- Confidentiality cannot be assumed in communication via social media and other digital/electronic means (including but not limited to e-mail, text messages, tweets, chats and messages via apps and social networking platforms). All such communication should be considered public in that it can be shared with and forwarded to others (intentionally or unintentionally) or reposted elsewhere. Content can have a long afterlife on the Internet even when specific posts have been deleted.
- Community environment and experience can be enhanced by establishing and communicating guidelines around respectful and appropriate use of social media and electronic communication devices during worship and church meetings and activities. (One example: Please mute all devices during the service, but feel free to tweet the best of this morning’s sermon.)
- Social media are dynamic and are most effectively used in organizational, leadership and ministry contexts where there is a commitment to regular monitoring and timely response.

**Some guidelines & recommended practices for online interactions in ministry with youth:**

(See also “Some additional guidelines...” on page 4.)

1. Adults who work with youth should maintain appropriately stringent privacy settings on any and all social media networks. Individual personal profiles are best for interacting with actual friends, family members, colleagues and peers; limited profile access or separate groups are more appropriate options for interacting with youth.

2. Adults should not submit “friend” requests to youth. Youth may submit “friend” requests to adults, and adults should discern the level of contact that is appropriate to maintain with all youth prior to responding to such requests. Adults should articulate their policy regarding “friend” requests from youth, and then practice that policy consistently.
3. If an adult chooses to accept “friend” requests from youth who are associated with their community of faith, it is recommended that other adult leaders have the same access to that adult’s profile and correspondence.
4. Adults interacting with youth via social media networks are encouraged to set up a closed group to which other adults have administrative access. Youth who submit “friend” requests to an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be
5. admitted as a “friend” on the adult’s personal account. This is one way to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries.
6. Closed (but not “hidden”) online groups are recommended to insure membership is limited to those involved with the youth ministry.
7. Online groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators.
8. Establish and clearly communicate norms for behavior and appropriate content for online youth groups, and moderate accordingly. Any content that details inappropriate behavior during a church-sponsored event or activity should be addressed by the clergy, adult youth leaders and parents.
9. 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 or 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 the DCF and/ or police.
10. Adult leaders of youth groups and youth members who depart or are no longer eligible because they have aged out of a program should be removed immediately from church-sponsored or organized online communication with youth groups via social networking sites, list serves, etc.

11. Some adults who work with youth secure signed release forms from parents or guardians before texting or e-mailing youth directly. Others inform parents or guardians in advance if they will be using e-mail or text messaging to communicate directly with youth, allowing parents or guardians an opt-out mechanism or an option of being copied on e-mails or texts sent to youth. A good practice is to include at least one other adult in text message or e-mail correspondence with youth, when appropriate. Platforms with no archive feature are not appropriate for communication between adult leaders and youth.
12. Model and maintain healthy practices and boundaries when responding to youth via online and electronic means by doing it during appropriate hours (for example, not during school hours or late at night).

**Some guidelines & recommended practices for online interactions in ministry with people of all ages:**

1. In social media networks, clergy and other leaders should maintain appropriate privacy settings and should articulate and practice a consistent online policy and presence with members of their congregations or ministry groups. Clergy and other leaders may accept “friend” requests from members of the congregation or ministry group, but it is recommended that they not initiate those requests. Some choose to create separate personal and professional social networking accounts to maintain appropriate boundaries with members of their congregations or ministry groups; others choose limited profile access with members; still others use only their church’s or ministry’s public social media pages or accounts for social networking interaction with the congregation or ministry group.
2. Clergy and other leaders should consider the content and nature of their online postings and presence, especially if their voice might be considered the voice of the church and their content understood to be church policy. Use disclaimers when appropriate and clearly identify personal opinion as such.
3. Clergy and other leaders who have moved to another congregation or ministry setting should set and observe boundaries and limit correspondence with members of the former congregation or group, via any media, to information necessary to the transition. Maintain online connections in a way that is consistent with appropriate

in-person leave-taking practices. When and where it isn't appropriate to sever social network connections, consider limited profile access or other boundary-setting practices.

4. Participants in video streams, chats or meetings should consider what will be shown in the video, such as their surroundings, state of dress, etc.
5. It is helpful to establish policies and guidelines for those administering church or ministry group social media accounts and online communication platforms. Don't delegate administration to people who aren't equipped to represent the church or group. Administrators of church or ministry group accounts and platforms should always consider voice and audience and post accordingly.

#### **Some e-mail considerations:**

1. E-mail can be an appropriate and effective means for communicating basic factual information but not matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or extensive enough that they might better be addressed by phone or in person.
2. Consider the ramifications of clicking "Send" or "Reply All" before doing so. It is also courteous, before sending, to take a moment to re-read message content and to check address fields for accuracy and subject lines for clarity. Obtain permission, when appropriate, before forwarding other people's message content.
3. When sending group e-mails (particularly to large groups and groups whose recipients do not know one another), respect and protect recipients' privacy by placing their addresses in the "blind" BCC field (not the TO field, where they will be displayed and accessible to all).
4. Those who feel they are drowning in e-mail may like to adopt and propagate some of the tips found at [www.emailcharter.org](http://www.emailcharter.org).

#### **Some additional guidelines related to publishing and posting online content:**

1. Common sense and common courtesy are two good guides.
2. Always cite sources and make sure content comes from credible ones before sharing or posting. Respect copyright and the intellectual/creative property of others and seek permission before using.
3. Make announcements and post signs when services or activities are being recorded for broadcast via the Web or other media.
4. Secure signed release forms from parents or guardians of minors participating in church activities that may be photographed or videoed for Web posting, broadcast or other online distribution.
5. Establish and practice a policy for identifying minors in photos published on church-sponsored sites and social networks; some choose to not include any names; others only first names. In all cases, do not post contact information for minors.

Sample release form:



## Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

138 Tremont Street Boston, Massachusetts 02111 • 617-482-5800 • [www.diomass.org](http://www.diomass.org)

I hereby give the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts [and/or: Fill in name of any affiliated organizations or projects, if applicable] permission to use my name and photo and/or video images of me in all forms and media for advertising, editorial and promotional usage.

PRINT NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Contact phone number and/or e-mail address (for verification or reference purposes only):

If subject is under 18:

Print full name of subject:

As the parent/legal guardian of the individual named above, I hereby give the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts [and/or: Fill in name of any affiliated organizations or projects, if applicable] permission to use photo and/or video images of her/him in all forms and media for advertising, editorial and promotional usage.

PRINT PARENT'S/GUARDIAN'S NAME: PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Contact phone number and/or e-mail address (for verification or reference purposes only):



## Appendix C: Protocols for Public Records Checks and Screening

In the Diocese of Massachusetts, congregations are required to screen all employees and volunteers working with vulnerable adults according to the following standards. For some positions, screening consists only of a Public Records Check. For other positions there are additional screening requirements of a written application, interview, and reference verification.

Church of Our Redeemer will comply with Massachusetts law and the CORI policy below when conducting a public records check. Church of Our Redeemer will use a vendor approved by the Diocese of Massachusetts and adopts the CORI policy of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts for use in the parish with reference not only to CORI results but to results of all information received through Active Screening Faith or any other approved vendor.

Church of Our Redeemer will seek guidance from the Diocese regarding how to proceed in the case of a faithful member of the parish desiring to serve in a position requiring public record screening who is concerned that public record screening is unsafe due to their immigration status.

Links to relevant websites can be found in Appendix C-1. An approved vendor by the Diocese of Massachusetts is ActiveScreening Faith. More information about ActiveScreening Faith can be found in Appendix C-1. You can use CORI (recognizing that CORI only checks Massachusetts records) for the public records check. The Diocese of Massachusetts CORI policy can be found in Appendix C-2. (If an organization does five or more CORI checks annually, it must have a written CORI policy.) Written application, interview, and reference verification are required before serving in certain roles and ministries. Appendix C-3 outlines the requirements depending on the person's position in the congregation.

### Public Records Checks

- Such checks must be completed before the employee or volunteer begins interacting with vulnerable adults
- Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records and sex offender registries;
- A Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) records check is needed if transporting vulnerable adults as part of, or an extension of, ministry of Church of Our Redeemer or for a congregation-sponsored event;
- A credit check is required with check signing authority; and
- Public records checks must be updated at least every *three* years.

### **Additional Screening Requirements**

Written application, interview, and reference verification are required before serving in certain roles and ministries. Where required, these components are generally conducted in the following order:

- Submission of a completed written application to serve in a specified role with a clearly defined, written “job description.” The application includes verifiable personal information;
- Personal interview;
- Reference verification conducted by Church of Our Redeemer to verify personal information and check references listed in the application (people who know but are not related to the applicant); and
- Maintenance of these records as described below.

Potential Leaders or Supervisors must be known and active in Church of Our Redeemer for at least six months before engaging in ministry with vulnerable adults.

Church of Our Redeemer must keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the congregation’s office. This includes: a signature by each applicant verifying receipt of a copy of this policy, forms giving permission for background checks and credit checks, and any written applications or notes from reference verifications. These documents will be kept in the locked portion of the file cabinets and available only to the Rector and Parish Administrator. When possible, background check and credit check information will be maintained electronically through the online portal used for these checks and not in hard copy form in the office.

## Appendix C1: APPROVED VENDORS

The Diocese of Massachusetts has engaged ActiveScreening Faith ([www.ActiveScreeningfaith.com](http://www.ActiveScreeningfaith.com)) as our vendor for performing national public records checks. While this type of search involves a small per-search fee, ActiveScreening Faith provides a thorough check including the following information:

- National Sex Offender Records Search
- National Criminal Records Search
- Verification of Applicants SSN
- Records Search under Alias or Maiden Names
- Federal Watch List Search
- Service Alerts – Searches for Possible Criminal Records from Other Municipalities
- Motor Vehicle and other searches available for additional fee

Congregations and organizations of our diocese will have the set-up fee waived but must establish their own ActiveScreening Faith account at by contacting [Sales@Activescreeningfaith.com](mailto:Sales@Activescreeningfaith.com). Please contact Nathaniel Fasman in the diocesan Human Resources office if you have questions about how your congregation can participate.

An alternative, available at no cost to registered individuals and organizations, is a Massachusetts criminal records check (<https://www.mass.gov/criminal-record-check-services>). There are two types of criminal record checks in Massachusetts: a name-based criminal record check and a fingerprint-supported criminal record check. A name-based criminal record check (CORI) returns information on available Massachusetts arraignments. This type of criminal record check is done by submitting the name and date of birth for a person. That information is then searched against Massachusetts court records to determine if there is a possible record for that person. This type of criminal record check contains only Massachusetts information and is not fingerprint supported. A fingerprint-supported criminal record check returns information on arrests made in Massachusetts and possibly in other states. This type of criminal record check is done by matching the fingerprints of a person against fingerprints collected by Massachusetts and other states.

### MASSACHUSETTS LAW

Employers in Massachusetts are subject to laws which govern how public records checks may be conducted. When considering applications for paid positions, it is paramount that these requirements be observed. Please refer to the following Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DJCIS) documents:

“WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MASSACHUSETTS CRIMINAL RECORDS” at <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2019/03/18/CORI%20booklet%20FINAL.pdf>

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination Fact Sheet Criminal Offender Record Information Administrative Procedure Reforms (November 2010)

<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/08/qs/criminal-records-fact-sheet.pdf>

“iCORI Policy for Organizations” at

<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/05/iCori%20Organizational%20Training.pdf>

A summary of the rights of Massachusetts job applicants is available from Mass Legal Help at <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/cori/applying-for-jobs>

Any employer or governmental licensing agency that submits five or more CORI requests annually shall maintain a CORI policy which must meet the minimum standards of the DCJIS model CORI policy. The CORI policy of the Diocese of Massachusetts is available [here](#).

## **Appendix C2: THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS CORI POLICY, Adopted by Church of our Redeemer**

This policy is applicable to the criminal history screening of prospective and current employees, subcontractors, volunteers and interns, and professional licensing applicants. For individuals in Massachusetts, where Criminal Offender Record Information and other criminal history checks may be part of a general background check for employment or volunteer work, the following practices and procedures will be followed.

At Church of Our Redeemer, the policies below apply not only to CORI information but to the results of all background screening information received through Active Screening Faith or any other Diocese-approved vendor.

### **I. CONDUCTING CORI SCREENING**

Any and all CORI checks will only be conducted as authorized by the DCJIS and MGL c. 6, §172, and only after a CORI Acknowledgement Form has been completed.

If a new CORI check is to be made on a subject within a year of his/her signing of the CORI Acknowledgement Form, the subject shall be given seventy-two (72) hours' notice that a new CORI check will be conducted.

### **II. ACCESS TO CORI**

The Diocese recognizes that any and all CORI obtained from the DCJIS is confidential, and access to the information must be limited to those individuals who have a "need to know."

At Church of Our Redeemer, only the Parish Administrator or employee charged with submitting background check requests and the Rector or Priest-in-Charge should have access to this information. Because these roles involve access to sensitive information, all parties will only look at the minimum information required to do their job and not beyond. In case of a question of judgment on which consultation is needed, the clergy person may reach out to the Regional Canon.

The Diocese will maintain and keep a current list of each individual authorized to have access to, or view, CORI. This list must be updated every six (6) months and is subject to inspection upon request by the DCJIS at any time.

As stated above, the Church of Our Redeemer must keep and maintain all application and screening records secure and confidential in the congregation's office. This includes: a signature by each applicant verifying receipt of a copy of this policy, forms giving

permission for background checks and credit checks, and any written applications or notes from reference verifications. These documents will be kept in the locked portion of the file cabinets and available only to the Rector and Parish administrator. When possible, background check and credit check information will be maintained electronically through the online portal used for these checks and not in hard copy form in the office.

### **III. CORI TRAINING**

An informed review of a criminal record requires training. Accordingly, all personnel authorized to review or access CORI at the Diocese and at Church of Our Redeemer will review, and will be thoroughly familiar with, the educational and relevant training materials regarding CORI laws and regulations made available by the DCJIS. Additionally, if the Diocese is an agency required by MGL c. 6, §171A, to maintain a CORI Policy, all personnel authorized to conduct criminal history background checks and/or to review CORI information will review, and will be thoroughly familiar with, the educational and relevant training materials regarding CORI laws and regulations made available by the DCJIS.

### **IV. USE OF CRIMINAL HISTORY IN BACKGROUND SCREENING**

Any CORI obtained for employment purposes shall only be accessed for applicants who are otherwise qualified for the position for which they have applied. Unless otherwise provided by law, a criminal record will not automatically disqualify an applicant. Rather, determinations of suitability based on background checks will be made consistent with this policy and any applicable law or regulations.

### **V. VERIFYING A SUBJECT'S IDENTITY**

If a criminal record is received from the DCJIS, the information is to be closely compared with the information on the CORI Acknowledgement Form and any other identifying information provided by the applicant to ensure the record belongs to the applicant. If the information in the CORI record provided does not exactly match the identification information provided by the applicant, a determination is to be made by an individual authorized to make such determinations based on a comparison of the CORI record and documents provided by the applicant.

### **VI. INQUIRING ABOUT CRIMINAL HISTORY**

In connection with any decision regarding employment or volunteer opportunities, the subject shall be provided with a copy of the criminal history record, whether obtained from the DCJIS or from any other source, prior to questioning the subject about his or her criminal history. The source(s) of the criminal history record is also to be disclosed to the subject.

## **VII. DETERMINING SUITABILITY**

If a determination is made, based on the information as provided in Section V of this policy, that the criminal record belongs to the subject, and the subject does not dispute the record's accuracy, then the determination of suitability for the position will be made. Unless otherwise provided by law, factors considered in determining suitability may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- (a) Relevance of the record to the position sought;
- (b) The nature of the work to be performed;
- (c) Time since the conviction;
- (d) Age of the candidate at the time of the offense;
- (e) Seriousness and specific circumstances of the offense;
- (f) The number of offenses;
- (g) Whether the applicant has pending charges;
- (h) Any relevant evidence of rehabilitation or lack thereof; and
- (i) Any other relevant information, including information submitted by the candidate or requested by the organization.

The applicant is to be notified of the decision and the basis for it in a timely manner. All hiring and employment decisions are made in accordance with applicable anti-discrimination and other law.

## **VIII. ADVERSE DECISIONS BASED ON CORI**

If an authorized official is inclined to make an adverse decision based on the results of a criminal history background check, the applicant will be notified immediately. The subject shall be provided with a copy of the organization's CORI policy and a copy of the criminal history. The source(s) of the criminal history will also be revealed. The subject will then be provided with an opportunity to dispute the accuracy of the CORI record. Subjects shall also be provided a copy of DCJIS' Information Concerning the Process for Correcting a Criminal Record.

If an adverse decision is made, the applicant may request that the Rector/Priest-in-charge, in consultation with the Regional Canon, provide a written explanation for their decision.

## **IX. SECONDARY DISSEMINATION LOGS**

The Diocese recognizes that all CORI obtained from the DCJIS is confidential and can only be disseminated as authorized by law and regulation. A central secondary dissemination log shall be used to record any dissemination of CORI outside this organization, including dissemination at the request of the subject.

## Appendix C3:

*Adapted from Diocesan Model Policy*

Role	CORI	SORI	Credit Check	Adequately Bonded	Application, Interview, Reference Check
Clergy	R	R			R
Postulants and Candidates	R	R			
Church Staff	R	R			R
Church Contractors	R*	R*			
Church Staff Unpaid	R*	R*			R
Youth Group Leader	R	R			
All Key Holders (includes Altar Guild, Property, regular renters/partners with keys)	R	R			
Eucharistic Visitors	R	R			
Pastoral Care Team	R	R			
Lay Licensed Ministers, Including Lay Eucharistic Ministers	R	R			
Vestry Members/Exec Team	R	R			
Wardens	R	R	R (if signing checks)		
Treasurers	R	R	R (if signing checks)	R	
Acolyte Mentor	R	R			
Catechist	R	R			
Confirmation Mentor	R	R			
Drivers-Paid	R	R			



Musicians working with children/ youth	R	R			
Nursery Worker	R	R			
J2A/Rite 13 Leader	R	R			
Other Check Signer			R		