

CLERGY

SAFE CHURCH

Policies and Practices



The Episcopal Diocese of Delaware

2011 Edition

Revised July 1, 2011

“Clergy Safe Church - Policies & Practices”

The Episcopal Diocese of Delaware

7/1/2011 Edition

July 1, 2011

Dear Friends and Colleagues in Ministry:

We have a fundamental commitment to make The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Delaware a good place and safe place for everyone to worship, work, and serve. This commitment is built upon the respect we have for the God-given dignity of every human being. It reflects the investment of hope that we place in all who serve the Church.

Christian faith is incarnational and sacramental. Through baptism God invites us to share in Christ's on-going ministry of salvation. As ministers and disciples we become, as Paul writes, "ambassadors for Christ." The Holy Scriptures teach us that ministers are sacred vessels. Drawing from the deep well of experience, Paul cautioned that these vessels are human and fragile. They can be broken. When boundaries are crossed, when standards of conduct are not upheld, and solemn vows are broken, there exists the potential for deep, abiding hurt and loss. This is the painful witness of individual victims, families, and congregations. We cannot ignore it. Respecting the dignity of every human being is a shared responsibility. Making our Church a good place and a safe place is a sustained commitment. It involves each one of us.

The attached guidelines and policies are offered for clergy. They are an attempt to find a point of balance between divine hope and human experience – between the creative and destructive potential that resides in every person. They are offered to the Diocese of Delaware in a spirit of trust. Experience teaches that faith flourishes when all baptized people know that church leaders can be trusted. Church discipline is most effective when all know that it will be administered with justice, fairness, and mercy.

As you review the attached material, you will see that our approach is comprehensive and balanced. The emphasis is on building up the Church and safeguarding every person. We do this by recruiting and selecting gifted, faithful ministers. We are committed to providing resources for continuing education, personal wellness, and pastoral support. When there is evidence of misconduct, anyone bringing a complaint will be received with respect. Procedures will be observed with discretion and care. The emphasis will be upon acting fairly, communicating clearly, and building trust in the process and its outcome.

I am grateful to all who assisted in the process of preparing these diocesan policies and guidelines. My prayer is that what we have written will prove to be a worthy guide as we order our community of faith in the Diocese of Delaware.

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. Wayne P. Wright
Bishop of Delaware

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Safe Church Practices in the Diocese of Delaware

July 1, 2011

Summary

We want the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Delaware to be a good place and safe place for everyone to worship, work, and serve. This is an ambitious goal. It is a shared responsibility. It requires a comprehensive and balanced approach. The Diocese of Delaware will give priority, attention, and resources for clergy in the following areas:

- *Recruiting, Interviewing, and Placing Gifted Ministers to Serve in this Diocese*
- *Supporting these persons by providing resources for pastoral care, collegiality, continuing education, and programs to promote personal wellness*
- *Developing and Administering Safe Church training, standards, and guidelines that are clear, compassionate, and fair*
- *Recruiting, Training, and Supporting all involved with the canonical system of clergy discipline as defined in The Episcopal Church and local diocesan canons*
- *Receiving with respect and discretion anyone bringing a complaint*
- *Responding thoughtfully and carefully when complaints about clergy conduct are made. Acting fairly and communicating clearly to build trust among all involved*

Recruiting, Screening, & Placement of Clergy Candidates

The Bishop's Office works in close collaboration with the Standing Committee, diocesan clergy, search consultants, and congregational search committees to identify and recruit gifted ministers to serve in this diocese. Our goal is to match gifts, talents, and experience of the minister with the needs, opportunities, and challenges of the ministry. As we search for candidates, we will attempt to cast the net as broadly as possible. The resources used in this process include: the Office for Transition Ministry, referrals, recommendations, and advice of search consultants.

In general we seek the following qualities in candidates:

Holiness – Do we have a lively sense of Christ's presence in the life of this person? Do others join in recognizing what we see? How would we describe the gifts, passion, creativity, energy, and enthusiasm that this person might bring to a new ministry?

Competence – Ministry requires a variety of talents and skills. Does this person have a share in these gifts that a new ministry will require? Can the person be developed through training and formation?

Stability of Life – Extending a call is an investment of hope and trust by the Church in a person. Does this person demonstrate the notes of personal maturity and stability that point toward fruitful future ministry?

Will This Ministry Be a Blessing to this Person? Ministry is not simply a job. It is a way of life. It is a way of following Jesus. Can we see how this new ministry will be rewarding, satisfying and life-giving to this person?

Will the Ministry of this Person Be a Blessing to the Church? What fruit will ordained ministry bear through the life of this person? Will the Church be built up? Will God's people be strengthened and encouraged? How do we imagine this happening?

Candidate Interviews

Essential to matching candidates and new ministries are reference checking, personal interviews, and site visits. It is a diocesan policy that:

- The Bishop's Office will check references for every final candidate in a search.
- Search Committees will make at least three reference checks before interviewing a candidate.
- The Bishop's Office will have a personal interview with each final candidate before a call is extended.
- Search Committees will make site visits to the final candidates before a decision is made about recommending a final candidate to the Vestry.
- The decision to extend a call is made by the Vestry.

Background Investigation

Once a decision is made and a call is extended, the Bishop's Office will be contacted. The Bishop as chief pastor of the diocese has the canonical responsibility for final decisions regarding canonical residence and licenses to serve in the diocese. It is diocesan policy that the following steps must be successfully completed *before* canonical residence can be established or a license issued for long-term service in the diocese:

- A fifteen-year background check will be completed by the Oxford Document Service or a similar agency.
- The candidate will complete at least two units of Safe Church Training offered by the Diocese of Delaware.
- The Bishop's Office will have on file a copy of the letter of agreement that defines the new ministry.

Wellness and Self-Care

Wellness and self-care are personal responsibilities for all who serve in the Church. The Diocese of Delaware offers a variety of services and resources to support and encourage wellness and self-care. These include:

- *Gatherings for New Clergy* – All clergy beginning new ministries in the Diocese of Delaware are asked to participate in regular gatherings hosted by the Bishop's office. These gatherings provide support for clergy and congregations during the first two years of a new ministry.
- *Mutual Ministry Review* – All clergy and congregations are encouraged to conduct a periodic review of their common ministry. The diocese offers both resources and consulting services to assist the review process.
- *Wellness Practices* – The diocese expects all clergy to observe generally recognized wellness practices. These include such things as taking regular days off and vacations as specified in letters of agreement; participation in colleague and/or mentoring groups; spiritual direction; retreats; regular medical exams and physical exercise.
- *Clergy Meetings* – All clergy are expected to participate in the regular meetings, retreats, and conferences sponsored by the diocese for the clergy.

Continuing Education, Conferences, and Sabbaticals

Opportunities for continuing education, conferences, and sabbaticals are written into the letters of agreement defining ministries in the diocese. The diocese has resources to plan programs of continuing education and sabbaticals. The diocese, upon request, can usually underwrite a share of the cost of continuing education and sabbaticals.

Participation in Diocesan Events

All Episcopal clergy make ordination vows to participate in the councils of the church. It is a diocesan expectation that clergy attend diocesan convention, clergy events and other regular diocesan meetings. Participation in ordinations and celebrations of new ministry are strongly encouraged.

Pastoral Situations and Emergencies

The Bishop and the bishop's staff are in regular pastoral contact with all who serve in the diocese – not only in times of emergency. When emergencies do arise, the Bishop and the Bishop's staff are ready to assist. The diocese also has funds reserved to cover emergency pastoral and medical expenses. Please contact the Bishop's Office when an emergency need arises.

Recruiting, Training, and Supporting all Involved in the Canonical System of Clergy Discipline

Episcopal Church and diocesan canons establish a system of accountability and discipline for clergy. The Diocese of Delaware commits to recruiting, training, and supporting all persons who serve in elected or appointed positions as part of this system. This is an important facet of our commitment to making this diocese a good place and a safe place for all.

Receiving a Complaint about Clergy Misconduct

The Diocese recognizes how difficult it may be for someone to come forward with a complaint regarding clergy conduct. It may mean disclosing sensitive personal information or recalling painful past experiences. The Diocese is committed to receiving anyone bringing a complaint with sensitivity, discretion, and respect. We will offer pastoral support and care as appropriate.

Responding to Complaints about Clergy Conduct

Episcopal Church and diocesan canons define the process for responding when complaints about clergy conduct are made. The Diocese is committed to responding thoughtfully and carefully when complaints are made. Our emphasis will be upon acting fairly, communicating clearly, and building trust so that decisions are made in a spirit of fairness and justice.

The following Policy Statement was adopted by the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Delaware with the support of the Bishop. The Policy provides guidance on education about sexual misconduct prevention for clergy in residence in the Diocese, and it also provides guidance for the clergy responsibility to assure that others listed in this policy also comply.

Policy Statement

July 1, 2011

The Diocese of Delaware understands sexual misconduct to refer to ways in which power and trust may be misused in a sexual way including: sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation. Sexual misconduct is wrong. Clergy, employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Delaware shall not engage in any form of sexual misconduct. Postulants and Candidates for Holy Orders are also subject to this policy.

The Diocese shall provide and it shall be required for all persons listed below to receive a minimum of four hours of education on issues of child sexual abuse in church settings and four hours of education regarding adult sexual misconduct in pastoral relationships and its prevention. A pastoral relationship is defined as a relationship between a cleric, employee, or volunteer and any person to whom such cleric, employee, or volunteer provides counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction, or from whom such cleric, employee, or volunteer has received confession or confidential privileged information or is a member of the congregation where the clergy serves.

Those required to receive this education include:

- + All Clergy canonically resident or licensed including retired clergy who wish to function in an ordained capacity
- + All employees of the Diocese and congregations (secretaries, sextons, organists, religious education directors, and anyone else considered an employee)
- + Anyone who regularly supervises youth activities (paid or volunteer), including youth group advisors, day care providers, acolyte trainers, youth choir leaders, camp counselors and staff
- + All employees and volunteers serving at Camp Arrowhead and Memorial House

The Diocese encourages broad training for all persons in positions of parish leadership. While not required, this education is strongly recommended for church school teachers; anyone who sees people in their homes on behalf of the church, e.g., Eucharistic Visitors or parish visitors; and Vestries. Copies of this statement should be made available to those involved in such ministries.

We affirm that breaking the fidelity of pastoral trust by any form of sexual misconduct demands a disciplinary process by the Church apart from any action of civil or criminal law and may include the termination of employment for any Diocesan lay employee, and in the case of a person who is ordained, inhibition, suspension, or deposition according to the Canons of the Episcopal Church. A complaint alleging sexual misconduct by an

ordained person may be brought either through a complaint to the Bishop or as provided for in Title IV of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church.

When such abuses do occur, the church must act with sensitivity and compassion toward all involved. It must also act in a way that produces justice. In order to provide this justice and begin the process of healing, those who have been hurt must be heard. Both victims and those accused of sexual misconduct need pastoral support as well as assistance in obtaining appropriate counseling. Pastoral assistance to families, the congregation, and other church leaders will be offered. We understand that the healing process is often lengthy, calling for the utmost in wisdom, justice, compassion and prayer.

PROCESS OF RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS OF CLERGY MISCONDUCT

An allegation of misconduct brought against any member of the clergy is a serious matter. By virtue of ordination, all bishops, priests and deacons accept additional responsibilities and accountability for doctrine, discipline, worship and obedience. The Episcopal Church believes that when an allegation of misconduct is brought against an ordained person, a process must be undertaken which involves receiving the allegation, investigating it, and providing various types of resolutions for the allegation. This process is defined by the Canons of The Episcopal Church and the canons in the Diocese of Delaware. The clergy person against whom the allegation has been made is expected to cooperate in the process.

Copies of the diocesan canons are available in the Bishop's Office or may be downloaded from the diocesan website: www.dioceseofdelaware.net. Copies of the Episcopal Church canons may be purchased from Church Publishing, Inc.: (www.cpi.org). They may be downloaded from the Episcopal Church website: www.episcopalchurch.org.