

Christ Church Cherry Valley

Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island



SafeR Church Policy

June 2015

Safer Church Policy For Christ Church Cherry Valley

Purpose:

This policy sets out the general strategy and principles, to make our parish and everything we do in connection with the church safe against any abuse. The intent is to protect people and to support a culture of trusting, positive relationships within our faith community and in the work we do.

Rationale:

- We want everyone in our parish to feel trusting and safe.
- We have both a legal and a moral obligation to take all reasonable measures to make sure that no one gets harmed as they take part in any way in our church activities.
- We acknowledge that a pattern or even an instance of abuse can be ruinous to the cohesion and the viability of a parish.
- We need to reduce the risk of legal/financial liability for the parish as a corporation and for its officers.
- We wish to comply with Diocesan direction to have a 'SafeR Church.'

Scope/Application:

1) This policy applies to:

a) any person acting on behalf of the parish, or involved in activities of the parish -- whether clergy, staff, volunteers or participants;

b) any parish program or activity -- whether church services, or any other group, special events (e.g. picnic, meal, vigil, dance), committee meetings, or services to others (e.g. home or institutional visiting); and

c) any location, whether the church, church grounds, or other off-site place, where the church-related activity takes place.

2) With regard to use of parish facilities by external parties -- whether by rental or permitted use -- application of this policy is modified.

The parish has responsibility for its facilities being risk-reduced to the extent reasonably possible within its control. Further, it is our duty to bring our abuse-related policy and rules to the attention of parties using the facilities, and to make them aware of the expectation that they are to follow such guides as applicable.

However, it is primarily the responsibility of the renter or other external user to protect participants in their events/activities against abuse.

Abuse:

In this policy, abuse means mistreating or harming a person -- through exerting some sort of power -- whether in a way that is physical, sexual, psychological/emotional, verbal, spiritual, financial or otherwise exploitative.

Policy

- 1) Abuse is unacceptable in our parish.
- 2) We will be proactive in preventing abuse and in dealing with abuse if it occurs. We will take concrete steps to reduce the risk of abuse happening, and to promote positive, trusting relationships. We will not attempt to ignore, let alone cover up demonstrated or suspected instances of abuse.
- 3) We will assess the risk of abuse in parish programs and activities, and put in place and actually use practical measures to prevent abuse. Typical methods which are likely to be included, for example, are police-check screening for any position of trust, sensitivity/respect training for leaders and volunteers, open-view arrangements for one-on-one contact, team-pairing of service-providers as may be appropriate.
- 4) We will have a protocol for responding to suspected abuse or to a complaint of abuse.
 - a) There will be a person designated as first contact or focal person -- normally the Priest-in-Charge, but in a case involving the Clergy, an alternative contact at the Diocesan level. The focal/contact person may seek guidance and assistance from such other person(s) as may be appropriate in the case, subject to respect for a complainant's confidentiality.
 - b) A person making a complaint may choose to use the help of a support person of their choice, and also may ask that it be arranged to express the complaint to a person of the complainant's own gender.
 - c) Any suspected abuse is to be considered seriously, including the gathering, in a sensitive way, of such information as may be needed, so as to determine the likelihood that abuse has indeed occurred or is occurring.
 - d) Where abuse is suspected to have occurred or be occurring, we are committed to taking action to stop it.
 - e) In a case where there is a legal requirement (under child or vulnerable adult protection law), suspected abuse is to be reported to the proper authorities, and full cooperation is to be given to the authorities.
- 5) We will make clear to all that a person who feels abused can in confidence report an incident or concern, and we will indicate the way in which such a report can be made.
- 6) We will be supportive to a victim of abuse, being sensitive to a person's right to confidentiality.
- 7) If a person expresses (to the Priest-in-Charge) that he or she has committed or is inclined to commit an abusive action, and wants to avoid committing abuse, the Priest-in-Charge (possibly with advice from others) will be supportive and try to help the person to find appropriate assistance.
- 8) We will not exclude a person with an established abusive past from church activities, but will exercise the right (via the Priest-in-Charge) to have that person not participate in activities where s/he might pose a risk or in some way intimidate vulnerable persons.

9) We will monitor the operation of this policy and the measures which are implemented under it in an evaluative way, at least annually and also as triggered by any incident connected with abuse. We will amend or add to them as need or advantage becomes evident.

10) We will follow any directives from the Diocese concerning prevention and handling of abuse. If there is any conflict or significant inconsistency between parish and Diocesan policy in this regard, the Diocesan policy has precedence.

11) We will raise awareness among all our people -- leaders, providers and users of services/activities, and parishioners in general -- about abuse, our policy and measures, and the shared obligation to help prevent abuse and to take action where abuse is suspected.

Responsibility:

Parish Council is responsible for overseeing operation of this policy; Council may designate a person or group to see that measures are being implemented and followed.