

Safe Church Policy
Trinity Church, Northborough, Massachusetts

Rev. March 2015

Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

Trinity Church provides Christian Education opportunities for all age groups in a safe, nurturing environment. We work together, as a community of faith, to keep our church a safe place for everyone. As teachers, volunteers, and leaders who work with youth, it is our responsibility to prevent the sexual abuse of our children. It is important that we always use common sense and uphold Trinity Church's safe church policy. This policy is written to assist all members of Trinity Church. With God's help and guidance, we can ensure that Trinity Church is a safe and loving haven for children and adults alike, and we can put an end to child sexual abuse.

I want to Work With Children at Trinity Church. What Do I Need to Do?

Trinity Church is always looking for new volunteers to work with our children and youth as nursery care providers, teachers, shepherds and workshop leaders, youth group leaders, Vacation Bible School leaders, Christmas pageant leaders, and youth choir directors. If you would like to volunteer, we ask that you:

- be active in the church community for at least six months before volunteering (church membership is not required)
- complete a CORI form
- participate in a safe church conversation with a member of the Safe Church Committee
- attend a yearly safe church training event or view Trinity's online safe church training

How Can We Keep Trinity Church Safe For All?

There are many things we can do to keep Trinity Church safe for all. Most of these things are simply good, old-fashioned common sense. As teachers and leaders of children and youth, you will be Christian role models for others to look up to. Examples of safe behavior include such things as:

- Always have two adults, age 18 or older, in the room when teaching a class or leading a youth activity (exceptions noted below).
- Avoid one-on-one situations.

- Support the “open-door policy,” which welcomes parents and guardians into church school classes and youth activities at any time.
- Never leave a group of children unattended.
- Always obtain permission slips for any activity that takes place off of Church premises.
- If you observe a violation in the policy, attempt to resolve it with the person involved (maybe the person isn’t aware of the policy, or the second adult has been delayed). Any unresolved violation **MUST** be reported to the Pastor, Chair of Deacons, and Chair of the Safe Church Committee. A representative of the committee will take appropriate action.

Are There Safe Church Training Opportunities to Participate In?

New volunteers are asked to participate in a safe church conversation. This is an informal conversation with a member of the Safe Church Committee. You will have the opportunity to review the safe church policy as well as ask any questions you may have about volunteering in the church school or youth programs at Trinity Church. This is a friendly dialogue, not a job interview, which provides you with the opportunity to learn more about our church school programs and our safe church policy. We ask that all potential volunteers participate in this safe church conversation.

All church school volunteers and youth program volunteers are asked to participate in a yearly safe church training event. This event may include a guest speaker, a video, or an informal discussion amongst participants. An online training will be available for volunteers who are unable to attend the training event.

What Happens if There is a Problem? Who Do I Talk To?

If you suspect a child is being abused, or if a child or youth is experiencing abuse at home and comes to you for help, it is important that you contact a church leader immediately. When speaking with a child or youth, listen very carefully to the child’s account of his/her experience, and let them know that you care. Tell the child that you believe that he/she is telling you the truth. Reassure the child that what has happened is not their fault. Explain to the child that in order to help them, you must tell other people who can help. After speaking with the child, record all information in writing and contact one of the following church leaders:

Senior Minister: Rev. Valeria Schmidt (work) 508-393-8156 (cell) 717-860-8873

Chair of Deacons: Laurie Hunter 508-269-2616

Please protect the privacy of all involved and keep any information regarding abuse confidential.

Addendum to Safe Church Policy

1. Purpose

As a community of faith we are committed to treating all who join us with love and dignity. We want our church to be a sanctuary for everyone, in terms of spiritual, emotional, and physical safety. We realize that children and youth are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse. This document outlines policies to ensure a safe environment for all at Trinity Church, Northborough.

2. Scope of Policies

The policies in this document apply to all activities which take place in our building, and all programs and events scheduled as part of our ministry but take place elsewhere. These policies apply to all members, volunteers, and employees of Trinity Church, as well as outside groups using the church facilities.

3. Distribution of policies

Our Safe Church Policy will be given to all employees and volunteers working with children and youth at Trinity Church, as well as leaders of other youth groups using our church facilities. A copy will be available in the Church Office and online.

4. Safe Church Team

The function of the Safe Church Team is to implement the Safe Church Policy. The team shall consist of the church school coordinator, a Deacon, a representative of the Christian Education Ministry Team, and the Pastor. The duties include:

- Annually review our Safe Church Policies
- Communicate the policies to our congregation
- Oversee Safe Church Training of our volunteers
- Conduct intake conversations about safe church policies with new volunteers
- Oversee collection of CORI forms and submit them to the CORI processor, review incident reports, and maintain documents in a secure location
- When necessary, report incidents to the State of Massachusetts Department of Social Services (Dept of Children and Families)
- Maintain strict confidentiality.

5. CORI Screening

Trinity Church requires Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) on all prospective employees, youth group leaders, and volunteers working with youth and children in a supervisory capacity. Non-supervisory volunteers (i.e., a one-time workshop guest working with a Sunday School teacher) do not require a CORI. The Pastor will review the reports before accepting the applicant as an employee or volunteer.

6. Two teacher policy

Each class or youth activity must have at least two adult leaders, with the following exceptions:

- Sunday School and Vacation Bible School classrooms may have one leader with an additional “roaming” adult leader
- If circumstances dictate that a child must be alone with a leader, the leader should contact the parent and wait with the child in a public space on church grounds.
- It is permissible to have one adult per car carrying youth to an off-site event. At no time should an adult be alone with a child other than his/her own.

7. Authorized youth events

All youth events must be scheduled through the church office, and documented on the church calendar.

8. Mandated reporting of child abuse

Any suspected child abuse must be reported to the Pastor or the Chair of Deacons. The Massachusetts standard for reporting abuse states that anyone with “a reasonable cause to believe” that a child under age 18 has suffered abuse or neglect must report the incident. The Massachusetts Conference, UCC recommends a telephone report be made to Department of Children and Families within 24 hours.

Any unusual incident or injury, even if it is not reported to DCF, must be reported to the Safe Church Team.