



CHURCH
OF THE
APOSTLES

COLUMBIA

Policy Manual for the Protection of Children

Thank you for your service!

The safety and security of our children and youth are our highest priority. Jesus himself made it plain that the Kingdom is made up of such as these, and that anyone who caused them to stumble was in a dire situation. (Mark 9.42) So we want to ensure that our children and teenagers find Church of the Apostles to be a warm, welcoming, safe place in which they never have to be afraid.

These policies reflect best practices for maintaining child safety, and we trust they will equip you to handle any difficult situations that may arise as an individual working closely with children who will see you as a trusted ally.

We require the following guidelines for those working with children:

1. Watch the online **Ministry Safe** sexual abuse prevention course, and pass their quiz within two weeks.

You will receive a link in your email from Ministry Safe (not CotA).



2. Give us authorization to perform a **Background Check** on you;
3. Read this Policy Manual and return the signed acknowledgment form;
4. Attend training specific to your ministry area conducted by the Nursery, Children's, or Youth Director.

It may seem a bit daunting to receive this as you begin to volunteer, but the days in which we live require vigilance in these matters. After these matters have been attended to, we have no doubt that your service as a Children's or Youth Ministry volunteer will be a joy and a blessing.

So again, thank you for your service in our parish!

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Biblical Foundation and Purpose

Church of the Apostles accepts with deep gratitude and seriousness the trust given us by God to nurture and care for his people, especially those who are most vulnerable and in need of protection. This is nowhere more true than when caring for our children and youth. Current statistics regarding child abuse are alarming. One in every three to four girls and one in every six to eight boys are sexually abused before age eighteen. Physical and emotional abuses continue to be serious problems in our society. The effects of such abuse can damage children at the core of who they are, and often follow them into adulthood. Abused children are children at risk. They often become adults who suffer from low self-esteem, who are unable to form and keep healthy relationships, and who struggle to maintain healthy boundaries. As the Church, we declare that we will work together to see that the proper love and care are extended to the children entrusted to us.

Jesus teaches explicitly that children are of much value in Kingdom terms, and that to cause one to sin has the gravest of consequences. Caring for our children and youth is a sacred trust.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:1-6 ESV)

Mark, in his Gospel account, adds the dimension of Jesus taking the children in his arms and blessing them (Mark 10:16).

As Christian adults we are called to establish a secure environment where the perfect love of God works to cast out all fear (1 John 4:18) and the nurture and love of God are made known to all, and in particular to our children and youth. In this way we can fulfill the biblical mandate to train up our children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6).

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance, information, instruction, and common practices to direct and inform the clergy and laity of Church of the Apostles as we seek to safeguard the children and youth entrusted to us. It also serves as a reference manual to inform our decisions and methods, providing minimum standards of care and vigilance.

May God be glorified in all we do.

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Definitions

Child/Children, for the general purposes of this policy, refers to all parishioners under the age of 18 or who attend the Children and Youth ministries as a participant of those programs.

Youth, is a subcategory of 'Child' and refers to those participating specifically in the Youth Ministry programs.

Children's programs are for children age 12 and younger with exceptions made based upon individual maturity as evaluated cooperatively by the Children's Director, the Youth Director, and the parents.

Youth programs are for those age 13 to 18 with exceptions as defined above.

Child Abuse, in practical terms, refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. In general, the definitions of "child abuse" and "child neglect" includes the following elements (among others):

- Physical abuse
- Neglect (both physical and mental)
- Sexual abuse/Exploitation

Specific definitions of child abuse and rules for the relevant child abuse reporting laws and legal definitions in South Carolina may be found under Title 63: South Carolina Children's Code

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Responsibility for this Policy

The Rector has overall responsibility for the administration of this policy and for providing all reports requested by the Diocese. In the absence of a Rector, the Priest in-Charge or the Senior Warden will be responsible. Duties may be delegated, except in those areas specifically delineating action by the Rector.

Parish Policy on Child Abuse

Church of the Apostles will not tolerate any form of child abuse involving our clergy, lay employees, volunteers, or other persons. Everyone who serves the church through educational, pastoral, recreational or other activities is expected to maintain the highest biblical standards in relationships with those to whom they minister, avoiding any form of misconduct against children. That commitment extends to sexual behavior.

No one in the employ or volunteer service of the church who has a civil or criminal record of child abuse, or who has admitted committing prior sexual abuse of a child, will be permitted to serve with children.

We are also committed to providing pastoral care to all involved with, and/or affected by, instances of child abuse. Pastoral care grows out of Christ-centered relationships and proceeds with an awareness of the spiritual and emotional needs of both the individual and the community. It may include providing guidance, support, consolation, and even confrontation in an effort to minister as we believe God would desire.

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Policy Standards Outlined

Church of the Apostles requires that each Ministry that has direct interaction with children have in place the following policy procedures. Our congregation is committed to creating a positive and healthy environment for children through the 5-step approach:

1	• Screening	page 8
2	• Training	page 11
3	• Interacting	page 12
4	• Monitoring	page 18
5	• Reporting and Responding	page 21

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Procedures for the Protection of Children

Screening Procedures

One effective means of reducing the incidence of child abuse is to screen carefully all clergy and all lay workers, paid and volunteer, working in youth and children's ministries. Church of the Apostles requires the following screening and background checks for all canonically resident and licensed clergy, and for all employees and volunteers who work with children:

Screening Clergy

The screening of clergy is the responsibility of the diocesan office. Careful screening of clergy is conducted initially during the ordination and search processes and includes:

- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks through Oxford Document Management Company or other diocesan-approved screening providers. Checks should be renewed no less often than every two years. It is the responsibility of all clergy to cooperate fully in all aspects of the screening process and to submit in a timely manner all documents needed to complete such checks
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks
- Conducting face-to-face interviews
- Requiring the clergy person to state, in writing, whether or not the clergy person and/or other members of the household have been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism.

Note: In addition, a full Oxford Document Management Company background check will normally be done every five years for all clergy in active ministry in the Diocese of the Carolinas.

Screening Employees

The screening of employees is the responsibility of the church. Careful screening of employees includes:

- Reviewing signed job applications for those working in youth and children's ministries
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks; checks should be renewed no less often than every two years
- Conducting personal and professional reference checks

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- Conducting face-to-face interviews
- Requiring each applicant to state, in writing, whether or not the applicant and/or other members of the household have been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism. A copy of this statement is found in the Appendix under **Tab-B**.

Screening Interns, Fellows, and Day Camp Staff

The screening of interns, fellows, and day camp staff is the responsibility of individual Ministry Directors. Careful screening of these individuals will include:

- Reviewing signed applications for those working in youth and children's ministries
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks; checks should be renewed no less often than every two years
- Conducting personal and other appropriate reference checks
- Conducting face-to-face interviews.
- Requiring each applicant to state whether or not the applicant and/or other members of the household have been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism. A copy of this statement is found in the Appendix under **Tab-B**.

Screening Volunteers

The screening of volunteers is the responsibility of the individual Ministry Directors. Careful screening of volunteers will include:

- Requiring a six month minimum attendance rule for volunteers in children's and youth ministries, except where the Bishop, in consultation with the Committee to Protect Children, has granted a variance.
- Reviewing signed volunteer applications for those working in youth and children's ministries.
- Conducting National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks. Checks should be renewed no less often than every two years.
- Conducting personal reference checks.
- Conducting face-to-face interviews.

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- Requiring each applicant to state whether or not the applicant and/or other members of the household have been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism. A sample copy of this statement is found in the Appendix under **Tab-B**.

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Training Procedures

Training is also an important deterrent to child abuse. Those who work with children or youth must be trained to recognize the warning signs of potential abuse, as well as learn the procedures for reporting suspected abuse. They also must become familiar with safe practices designed to reduce the potential for abuse occurring. Church of the Apostles requires the following training:

Reading Requirements

All members of the clergy, all members of the vestry, those staff members with direct supervision over youth or children, and all volunteers working with youth or children must certify that they have read, understood, and accepted the Church of the Apostles Policies on the Protection of Children. An acknowledgement form is included in the Appendix under **Tab-C**.

Workshop Attendance Requirements

- ✓ **Online Awareness Training:** Every two years, clergy and those staff and volunteers who have contact with youth and children must complete the online Sexual Abuse Prevention Course and follow-up test provided by Ministry Safe (or an approved equivalent).
 - This training may be completed either individually or as a group during the required Policy Training session outlined below.
 - Each individual will be entered into the Ministry Safe System and receive his or her own link to the video and test. They must watch the video and then complete the 25 questions test.
 - A copy of the certificate of completion that is presented at the end of the Ministry Safe online training is sufficient to demonstrate compliance with this requirement.
 - Clergy are responsible to submit to the diocesan office evidence of completed training every two years. The church is responsible to track and document the training/retraining of its staff and volunteers.
- ✓ **Policy Training:** All volunteers who have contact with youth and children must be trained in the guidelines set forth in this manual and any safe practices specific to their ministry. This training will be provided by the Ministry Directors on an annual basis.

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Interacting Procedures

These procedures help children and adults feel safe in ministry and help detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse.

Addictive Behaviors

Clergy, staff members, volunteers, and participants in youth and children's ministries should refrain from the use, possession, or being under the influence of tobacco products, alcohol, or any illegal drugs while in church facilities, while traveling with or in the presence of children or their parents, during church-sponsored activities, or while working with or supervising children.

Communication

Verbal interactions between clergy, staff members, or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, clergy, staff members, and volunteers shall avoid talking to children or parents in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, clergy, staff members, and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children. Concerns about children should be directed to parents, legal guardians, the appropriate ministry leader, or the clergy.

Clergy, staff members and volunteers shall avoid engaging in any sexually-oriented communications with children, (except as noted in the following section in educational or abuse- reporting contexts), and shall refrain from discussing any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child in the program.

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers shall report any sexually-oriented communications involving a child to the appropriate ministry leader or clergy.

Sexually-Oriented Materials

Clergy, staff members, volunteers and participants in youth and children's ministries shall not share / view pornographic materials while in church facilities or in the presence of children. Staff members and volunteers may employ (subject to limitations imposed by the Rector or Rector's designee) age-appropriate materials when leading discussions dealing with human sexuality/sexual abuse prevention/sexual purity. Any prospective material should normally be made available for review by the parents of participants. Prior to introducing these materials, notice will be provided to parents in order to allow an opt-out should there be concerns or objections.

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Social Media

Facebook and all social media avenues are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. Their world is often constructed around social media, for better or worse. Having personal interactions in this venue allows adults to model appropriate behavior in social media, and it forms valuable connections with students.

Clergy, staff members, and volunteers shall refrain from connecting with students on social media when students are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet (for example, Facebook's minimum age is currently 13).

Photography

Photos of children shall not be used contrary to parental wishes. Ministries shall refrain from posting any personally identifying information about children pictured online or in print publications without prior parental permission. This is easily handled by including a consent statement on programming registrations that are signed by the parent/guardian.

Physical Interaction

Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer. It is the parish policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. No form of physical discipline is acceptable.

This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In some circumstances physical restraint may be used to prevent self-injury by the child and/or harm to others or to property. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents, the Children's Ministry Director, Youth Director, and/or clergy.

Those who serve, whether as clergy or lay workers, paid or volunteer, maintain a powerful relationship of authority and trust with the people to whom they minister. Betrayal of that trust through violation of sexual boundaries causes great emotional and spiritual harm. Such misconduct is a denial of our calling as Christians and may be a violation of the law. We must take every step to prevent it, and to respond with swift justice should misconduct occur.

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The following standards of interaction with children shall be carefully followed at all times:

- **Appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children is important for children's development, and is generally suitable in the church setting.**
 - Appropriate physical affection includes:
 - high-fives
 - handshakes
 - fist bumps
 - thumbs up
 - head pat
 - side hug
 - smiling
 - pats on the back
 - Inappropriate physical affection includes:
 - wrestling
 - tickling
 - sitting in laps (except for in the nursery, children ages 0-3)
 - kissing on the lips
 - full frontal hugs
 - commenting on children's bodies
 - forcing unwanted affection
 - **Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden.** Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to 1) an immediate supervisor, **and** 2) the Senior Warden and/or clergy.
 - **Physical contact and affection shall be given only in observable places.** It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
 - **Physical contact in any form shall not give even the appearance of wrongdoing.** The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Youth and Children's Ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
 - **Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child.** A child's preference not to be touched must be respected at all times.

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- **Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.**

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Restroom Use

Nursery-Aged and Special Needs Children

Because nursery and special needs children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers shall observe the following policies:

Diapering

- Only female nursery workers, who have been fully screened and trained, or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- Changing of diapers shall be done in plain sight of other nursery workers; children shall not be left unattended while being changed.
- Children shall be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.

Toilet Training

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only screened and trained nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children.
- When children are assisted in bathrooms the stall door will be left partially open.
- Preschool-aged children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing.

Elementary-Aged Children

- Elementary-age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children shall receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) A same-aged-peer buddy system may also be used.
- Staff members and volunteers shall take steps to avoid being alone with one child in the restroom. If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to

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accompany, he/she shall go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker shall leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try verbally to assist the child in completing his/her activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

First Aid and Medication

If possible, medication should be administered by the child's parent. Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer as authorized by the parent. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over-the-counter medication.

When medically necessary, medication or first aid may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer consistent with the Supervisory Plan (see **Tabs D and E**). Parents shall be notified whenever medication or first aid has been administered.

The Release of Children

Any time that a child has been entrusted to church staff members or volunteers, the church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care at the close of services or activities only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. It is presumed that a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

A system shall be in place in the Nursery and Children's Ministry areas to assure the responsible releasing of children to the correct persons. A description of this system should be included in the Supervisory Plan (**Tabs D and E**).

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately contact their ministry supervisor before releasing the child.

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines shall be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

- Adult volunteer drivers must provide to the church copies of valid driver's licenses, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
- The adult driving the child must have undergone a background check including a DMV record check.

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- Use of child safety seats that meet federal standards is required. Drivers and passengers must also follow airbag age/weight regulations per specific vehicle guidelines.
- The Church will consult with their insurance provider regarding the minimum age for adult drivers. Under no circumstances should anyone under the age of 18 be allowed to drive children/youth as part of an event.
- At no time shall there be one adult and one child traveling in a vehicle (except in a parent/child or other familial situation). Automobiles will contain either one driver and two or more participants or two adults and any number of children (within the seat belt limitations of the vehicle; seatbelts are ALWAYS required). If there is an extenuating circumstance causing only one adult and one child to travel together in an automobile, permission must be obtained from a parent or legal guardian of the child. This permission shall be written and signed by the parent/guardian or documented by the volunteer if only verbal consent is obtainable. The child or youth shall be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in such circumstances.
- No cell phones, including hands-free devices, may be utilized by the driver while driving church-owned vehicles, unless in an emergency.
- Children shall be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place are not permitted. Stops for meals, refueling, and restroom breaks shall be done as a group. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- Staff members and volunteers shall avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- No one under age 25 may drive vehicles rented by the church unless explicitly allowed by the rental agreement.
- No drivers under age 25 may drive church-owned vehicles unless explicitly covered by the church's auto insurance policy.

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Monitoring Procedures

Monitoring helps detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse where none has occurred. Research confirms that off-site activities increase the risk of abuse. Vestry, clergy, staff, and volunteers must be diligent in monitoring and supervising children's and youth activities in all settings at all times.

Monitoring practices include, but are not limited to the following:

- All children and youth activities shall be designed to be supervised by two or more screened and trained individuals.
- No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the property during or following a church activity.
- **Clergy, staff members, and volunteers shall not conduct unobserved meetings or interactions with children.**
- In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions shall take place in a public place or where other persons are present.
- Watching for policy violations
- An open invitation for parents to visit at any time unannounced
- A careful review of new programs and/or significant changes to a program structure
- Keeping interaction with children in full view of others at all times.
- Keeping unused rooms locked where possible.
- Keeping children and youth in supervised areas within the church building
- An onsite or offsite written Supervisory Plan shall be in place for all educational, pastoral, recreational, or other programming that involves youth or children. The purpose of the supervisory plan for any given activity is to give direction to staff, both volunteer and paid, and to ensure appropriate measures are in place to meet the Parish standard for supervision. All staff for the activity need to be informed of the contents of the supervisory plan. It is recommended that a copy of the plan be provided for staff persons, and that the plan be posted in a visible location. Please refer to **Tab-D and E** for the recommended Supervisory Plan formats.

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On-site Supervisory Plans shall include sections detailing:

- A description of the nature of the activity
- The details of the registration process and registration form
- The personnel responsible for running the activity
- An adult to child ratio staffing plan. The following is the recommended ratio of adults to children,

Infants: 2 adults for up to 8; 1 additional adult for every additional 1 to 4 infants

Young toddlers: 2 adults for up to 10; 1 additional adult for every additional 1 to 5 toddlers

2 and 3 years: 2 adults for up to 16; 1 additional adult for every additional 1 to 8 2-to-3-year-olds

4 years: 2 adults for up to 20; 1 additional adult for every additional 1 to 10 4-year-olds

School age: 2 adults for up to 36; 1 additional adult for every additional 1 to 18 school aged child

Mixed age group: ratio for the youngest child in the group

- A description of the physical environment, noting potential hazards and a mitigation plan
- Bathroom procedures
- First aid and medication procedures
- The reporting of discipline concerns
- Procedures for the release of children to parent or guardian.

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School age: 2 adults for up to 36; 1 additional adult for every additional 1 to 18 school aged child

Mixed age group: ratio for the youngest child in the group

- A description of the physical environment, noting potential hazards and a mitigation plan
- Bathroom procedures
- First aid and medication procedures
- The reporting of discipline concerns
- Offsite transportation plan
- Dining arrangements
- Sleeping arrangements
- Showering arrangements
 - Staff members and volunteers shall never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, a weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the Children's Ministry Director or Youth Director will detail procedures for showering or changing clothes in the supervisory plan for the scheduled event.
- Procedures for the release of children to parent or guardian.

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Responding and Reporting Procedures

State laws generally require that certain categories of persons responsible for the care or treatment of children report to state authorities when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected, or is in danger of abuse or neglect.

The specific South Carolina law (Title 63) states:

The following persons must report when, in such person's professional capacity, he has received information that gives him reason to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected as defined in Section 63-7-20: a physician, nurse, dentist, optometrist, medical examiner, or coroner, or an employee of a county medical examiner's or coroner's office, or any other medical, emergency medical services, mental health, or allied health professional, member of the clergy including a Christian Science Practitioner or religious healer, clerical or nonclerical religious counselor who charges for services, school teacher, counselor, principal, assistant principal, school attendance officer, social or public assistance worker, substance abuse treatment staff, or childcare worker in a childcare center or foster care facility, foster parent, police or law enforcement officer, juvenile justice worker, undertaker, funeral home director or employee of a funeral home, persons responsible for processing films, computer technician, judge, and a volunteer non-attorney guardian ad litem serving on behalf of the South Carolina Guardian Ad Litem Program or on behalf of Richland County CASA.

If a person required to report pursuant to subsection (A) has received information in the person's professional capacity which gives the person reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by acts or omissions that would be child abuse or neglect if committed by a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, but the reporter believes that the act or omission was committed by a person other than the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the reporter must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

In addition:

Except as provided in subsection (A), a person who has reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect may report, and is encouraged to report, in accordance with this section. A person, as provided in subsection (A) or (B), who reports child abuse or neglect to a supervisor or person in charge of an institution, school, facility, or agency is not relieved of his individual duty to report in accordance with this section. The duty to report is not superseded by an internal investigation within the institution, school, facility, or agency.

Every ministry in the church that has direct interaction with children must be familiar with the applicable child abuse reporting requirements and procedures in South Carolina. The heads of those ministry areas must also assure that every person, staff or volunteer, responsible for the care of children in the church is made aware of the reporting requirements and procedures.

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In addition to complying with any applicable legal requirements, Church of the Apostles will have in place appropriate procedures for internal reporting to the appropriate church leaders of any suspected mistreatment of or injury to a child and any suspicious or unusual information about a child.

Church of the Apostles will review the applicable laws in South Carolina and create a written response plan that is consistent with those laws. This written response plan will include at the minimum the following response and reporting procedures:

1. Responding to the Child Victim
2. Reporting to Church Authorities
3. Reporting to Legal Authorities in Accordance with Applicable Laws
4. Release of Information
5. Internal Church Communication and Reporting

See **Tab-I** for the Parish Response Plan for Suspected Child Abuse.

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Reporting to Legal Authorities in Accordance with Applicable Laws¹

No allegations, complaints or reports of suspected abuse should be ignored. As discussed above, ministries in our parish should be aware of and should comply with any applicable legal obligations to report suspected child abuse and neglect. Further, even where reports are not legally required, voluntary reports of suspected abuse or neglect are legally permitted in South Carolina and should always be considered with the assistance of legal counsel. If the church determines that a report is legally required or decides that it should make a permissive report even though one is not legally required, the contact information in the box below may be helpful in reaching appropriate legal authorities.

Contact the SCDSS 24-hour, toll-free hotline
at 1-888-CARE4US or 1-888-227-3487.

- **Cooperate With Investigating Legal Authorities.** Subject to advice of the church’s legal counsel, the church should cooperate in the investigation conducted by the governmental agency to which the report has been made, as well as any other law enforcement agencies involved with the investigation.
- **Notify Insurance Providers.** Unless the church’s legal counsel advises otherwise, the church should promptly notify its liability insurance company. This is important for at least four reasons: (1) the insurance policy may require immediate notification for coverage to be effective; (2) the policy may pay for counseling or legal advice; (3) the policy may not provide coverage for lawsuits involving acts of sexual abuse; and (4) the insurance carrier, having dealt with similar cases, may be a source of helpful advice. Unfortunately, most insurance policies do not generally cover sexual misconduct or negligent hiring/supervision in sexual abuse situations. Separate “riders” can be purchased, although some require strict preconditions to insurance coverage like screening, awareness, and prevention training.
- **Appropriately Document Actions.** Designated clergy should document any actions taken regarding the complaint, and retain that documentation in confidential files. (The church’s legal counsel may have specific instructions for how such documentation should be prepared and maintained.) It should be noted that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the legal responsibility of the police or child protective authorities. It is not the responsibility of church leaders to prove that such an incident did or did not take place.

¹ The Rector or other appropriate church leaders should consult with the church’s legal counsel for assistance in identifying and complying with the appropriate abuse reporting requirements within the required time frame under applicable state laws. For example, consultation with legal counsel may be important to determine: (1) whether a reporting obligation exists; and (2) whether the worker is protected from such an obligation by an applicable legal privilege (such as the clergy privilege).

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Internal Church Communication and Reporting

In addition to the reporting obligations discussed above, clergy, staff members, and volunteers shall also promptly internally report to the appropriate ministry leader or clergy, an immediate supervisor, and/or to the Rector (or his/her designee) whenever the clergy, staff member, or volunteer:

- Is involved in or becomes aware of any sexually-oriented communications involving a child connected with the church; or
- Is involved in or becomes aware of any inappropriate behavior involving a child by a clergy person, a staff member, or a volunteer; or
- Is arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, is charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; commits an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) is diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism; or
- Becomes aware that a member of his/her household has been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect; been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism; or
- Becomes aware that a person who is attending the church has been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect; has been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding; has committed an act of child sexual abuse; or (except as otherwise prohibited or limited by applicable laws and regulations) has been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism or exhibitionism.

Such information is important to enable church leaders to see that appropriate child protection mechanisms are in place in accordance with this policy.

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Parish Wide Events

There are a variety of events sponsored by our Parish where children will be present besides those directly overseen by the Children's and Youth Ministries. While it may be presumed that parents have the primary responsibility for the safety and well being of their children at such events, Church of the Apostles does bear a secondary responsibility to ensure that our building and our events are as safe for our families and their children as may reasonably be done.

With that intention, the following suggestions are given for helping to aid in the safety and protection of our children at all our Parish sponsored events.

- All unused rooms should be locked - specifically the Sunday School rooms in the Children's wing, the Nursery, and the Adult Education rooms.
- A team of two staff members or volunteers (Porters Guild) should be assigned to periodically walk through the building and to encourage any unsupervised children found in parts of the building away from the current church event to return to the appropriate section of the building.
- An On-Site Supervision Plan, Tab D, be completed to assist the leadership of the event in thinking through how best to provide a safe environment for all participants.

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- **Home Group Procedures**

Church of the Apostles does not have, and therefore does not exercise, control over home groups. The care and protection of children in such settings is always the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child. The church provides some resources that may help empower and equip parents/guardians and any home groups as they exercise their care and responsibility. In home groups where children are present, even on an occasional basis, leaders are encouraged to read this policy, take parish-approved child abuse prevention training, and follow as closely as possible the provisions outlined in this policy, including the development of a supervision plan, which should consider the following:

- Supervision by two screened and trained individuals. Supervision by a single individual is never a good idea.
- Physical environment should be inspected and prepared for child safety for the developmental age of those being served, (keeping in mind outlet coverings, sharp corners, sharp objects, unsecured furniture, access to outdoors, toxic materials, etc.).
- Restroom procedure. For any child who requires assistance, parents should be responsible for diapering and meeting other restroom needs.

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Documentation Requirements

Church of the Apostles is required by the Diocese to obtain and keep documentation, in perpetuity, which includes evidence of the following:

- Employee and volunteer applications for those working in youth and children's ministries.
- National Sexual Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks renewed every two years.
- Personal and professional reference checks.
- For drivers: copy of valid driver's license, vehicle registration, DMV record, and proof of auto insurance.
- Interviews.
- Certification that the clergy, vestry, and all lay workers, paid and volunteer working in youth and children's ministries, have read, understood, and accepted Church of the Apostles and the Diocese of the Carolinas Policies on the Protection of Children, see Acknowledgement Form at end of this Manual.
- Diocesan-approved workshop or online course completion and certificate renewal every two years.
- Written supervisory plans.
- Reports of suspected child abuse, see **Tab-A** (should be kept in a secured location).

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Tab – A: Form for Report of Suspected Child Abuse

Confidential: Keep completed form in locked file

Information Regarding the Person Suspected of Child Abuse:

Name of suspected abuser: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Title/Relationship to Church (if any): _____

Information Regarding Suspected Victim(s):

Name of suspected victim: _____

Age: _____ Male/Female: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Relationship to the Church: _____

Name of any other suspected victim: _____

Age: _____ Male/Female: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Relationship to the Church: _____

(Continued)

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Confidential: Keep completed form in locked file

Information Regarding Incident(s) of Suspected Child Abuse:

How did you become suspicious of possible abuse?

Describe any physical evidence of the suspected abuse:

Describe each incidence of suspected sexual abuse, including the type of abuse, date(s), time(s), and location(s) of suspected abuse:

Name any eyewitness to each suspected abuse incident (additional information regarding witnesses is sought below), and describe how that witness viewed the event:

(Continued)

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Confidential: Keep completed form in locked file

Information Regarding Witnesses to Suspected Child Abuse:

Name of Witness: _____

Age of Witness: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Relationship to Church: _____

Name of Additional Witness: _____

Age of Witness: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Relationship to Church: _____

Information Regarding Person(s) to Whom Suspected Abuse was Reported:

Name and title of church official to whom the abuse initially was reported (for example, Sunday School teacher, Rector, etc.): _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Date that initial report was made: _____

(Continued)

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Confidential: Keep completed form in locked file

Name and title of the person making the initial report to the church official:

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Relationship to the Church (if any): _____

Was the suspected abuse reported to Child Protective Services (“CPS”)?

If yes, state the date the report was made to CPS: _____

Name and title of person reporting to CPS: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Name of CPS worker contacted: _____

CPS contact’s telephone number: _____

Was the suspected abuse reported to police?

If yes, state the date the report was made to police: _____

Name and title of person reporting to police: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Police department and contact person: _____

Police contact’s telephone number: _____

(Continued)

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Confidential: Keep completed form in locked file

Were the parents notified?

If yes, the date parents were notified: _____

Name and title of person notifying parents: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Parents' names: _____

Parents' address: _____

Parents' telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Was suspected abuse reported to the Diocese via telephone?

If yes, the date report was made to the Diocese: _____

Name and title of person reporting to the Diocese: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Diocese contact person: _____

Diocese contact number: _____

Is a copy of this completed report being sent to the Diocese?

If yes, state date when report is being sent: _____

Name and title of person sending report to the Diocese: _____

Address: _____

(Continued)

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Confidential: Keep completed form in locked file

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Diocese contact person to whom report is being sent: _____

Any other information which may be helpful to the investigation:

Information Regarding Person Completing this Form:

Name and Title: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (home/work/cell): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Tab – B: Volunteer Screening Statement

Have you ever:

- Been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged? Yes No
- Been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding? Yes No
- Committed an act of child sexual abuse? Yes No
- Been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations)? Yes No

Has any other member of your household:

- Been arrested for, or convicted of, any crime involving child abuse and/or neglect, or had any such conviction expunged? Yes No
- Been charged with child sexual abuse in a civil proceeding? Yes No
- Committed an act of child sexual abuse? Yes No
- Been diagnosed with any paraphiliac psychological condition, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, including, but not limited to, pedophilia, voyeurism, or exhibitionism (except where such inquiry is prohibited or limited by applicable laws or regulations)? Yes No

Printed Name

Signature

Date

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Tab – C: Policy Acknowledgement Form

**COTA Child Protection Policy
Acknowledgement Form**

I certify that I have read (check all that apply):

the Church of the Apostles Policy Manual on the Protection of Children
and/or

the Diocesan Policy Manual on the Protection of Children

I further certify that I will abide by the provisions of this policy as long as I am an employee/volunteer of Church of the Apostles

Printed Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

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Tab – D: Recommended On-Site Supervision Plan Format

Program Title:

Brief Description of Program/Event:

Registration Process (with Registration Form attached):

Personnel in Charge of Program/Event:

Adult to child ratio:

Description of Physical Environment (noting any Potential Hazards with mitigation plan):

Bathroom Procedures:

First aid and medication procedures:

Injury/Incident/Discipline Reporting Procedure:

Program/Event Concerns Reporting Procedure:

Release of Children Procedure:

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Tab – E: Recommended Off-Site Supervision Plan Format

Program Title:

Brief Description of Program/Event:

Registration Process (with Registration Form attached):

Personnel in Charge of Program/Event:

Adult to child ratio:

Description of Physical Environment (noting any Potential Hazards with mitigation plan):

Bathroom Procedures:

First aid and medication procedures:

Injury/Incident/Discipline Reporting Procedure:

Program/Event Concerns Reporting Procedure:

(Continued)

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Offsite transportation plan

Dining arrangements

Sleeping arrangements

Showering arrangements

Release of Children Procedure:

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Tab – F: Pastoral Response to Known Sexual Offenders

The church must make every reasonable effort to protect children. Special care must be taken when a church interacts with a person who is registered as a sexual offender, or self-discloses a history of sexual misconduct towards children, or self-discloses a struggle with sexual attraction toward children.

When such a person is known to be a participant in the church or its activities, the clergy shall inhibit that person from any contact with children and shall require (except as otherwise directed by the church's legal counsel) the offender to sign a contract/covenant that details expectations, defines boundaries and off-limits locations (e.g. children's areas, acolyte vesting areas), and establishes appropriate supervision (such as, for example, a bathroom escort) for the offender while on church premises and/or at church activities. The church shall have in place a plan to deal with any violation of the contract/covenant.

If the perpetrator is observed acting in an inappropriate manner with children or their families, the Rector or wardens shall inform the family /families of a potential danger to their child/children (unless otherwise directed by the church's legal counsel). Where appropriate, the Rector or Senior Warden shall consult the offender's probation or parole officer to assure that supervision and reporting requirements have been met.

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Tab – G: The Church’s Understanding of and Response to an Incident of Abuse

Caring for the Congregation

Incidents of child abuse, and the secrecy that often surrounds them, can cause devastating harm to the church as well as to the victims. Therefore, where current or past child abuse has been perpetrated by clergy, staff, or volunteers of the church, the church shall provide consultation to encourage the discussion of such incidents and to provide a means to facilitate healing within the church. **Tab-H** presents one suggested model of how this may be done: a congregational trauma debriefing model.

It is essential the church responds to a report or instance of abuse or misconduct in a manner that promotes healing for the victim, the offender and the loved ones of both parties, as well as healing within the congregation generally.

Traumatic events have well-documented effects, both immediate and delayed. When a congregation experiences a trauma, the impact is likely to be expressed through symptoms such as:

- Loss of energy or feeling of paralysis
- Distrust of leadership (often projected onto future leadership)
- Divisions within the congregation
- Some group members feeling isolated and withdrawing from the group
- Anger being displaced onto unrelated issues, or blown out of proportion
- A conspiracy of silence about the traumatic event
- Despair about the congregation’s future
- Distorting responsibility for the event
- Seeking a "quick fix" without thoughtful reflection
- Difficulty making normal and necessary decisions.

All of these symptoms could be carried into subsequent years unless the trauma is processed, integrated into the life of the congregation, and healed. A useful model for addressing and integrating a trauma is the "debriefing" model drawn from disciplines that do crisis counseling, such as emergency medicine, law enforcement, military science, crisis chaplaincy, and disaster agencies.

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A trauma debriefing allows participants to integrate the reality of the event with their own responses to that event. The Church Information, Trauma, and Healing Debriefing Model set forth in **Tab H** is an effective means to communicate, process, and accept facts, allow feelings to surface, and then, through God's healing grace, head into the future unhindered by the past.

Guiding Principles for Healing in the Church

The following guidelines outline steps that can be taken to promote healing in the congregation:

- 1) **Contact with the family** Before the process for healing begins, the Bishop or his representative should maintain regular contact with the Complainant(s) and describe to Complainant(s) the procedures to be used for promoting congregational healing.
- 2) **Privacy Concerns** The privacy of the Complainant(s) must be balanced against the need for openness with the local church. Insofar as possible, the identity of the Complainant(s) and any details which may identify him/her should be kept confidential.
- 3) **Providing Facts** The procedures shall take into account that church members usually know when "something is going on," and, in the absence of facts, rumor and speculation will grow.
- 4) **Notifying Lay Leadership** The lay leadership should be advised promptly of the issues, since that group's participation is vital in planning and implementing the processes for church healing.
- 5) **Trauma Debriefing** The healing and unity of a congregation are fostered when there is an open meeting, called a Church Information, Trauma, and Healing Debriefing ("Debriefing"), at which the Bishop or his representative presents as much factual information as possible.

Since the local church will likely include people who have experienced abuse or misconduct themselves, appropriate personnel trained in crisis ministry should be present and available on a small group or one-to-one basis immediately after the formal presentation. Also, local mental health resources (including sliding scale fee agencies) should be publicized so that members of the congregation know how to find these services. (Note that many communities have publicly funded survivor services, which offer a variety of specialized resources.)

The debriefing generally should follow the process set forth in **Tab H**. The message should be, "The Church is a place for truth. We follow Jesus, who described himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

- 6) **Church Spokesperson** The vestry, in consultation with the clergy, is encouraged to appoint a church spokesperson. The congregation, including church members and staff members, is urged to refer all media inquiries to the church spokesperson.

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- 7) **Interim Priest** If the circumstances require that an interim priest be engaged, that priest should have special training in trauma debriefing. The interim priest should have regular opportunities to report and consult with the Bishop, his designated staff person, and counselors.
- 8) **Consulting Legal Authorities** Neither the clergy nor any other church worker should attempt to impede persons who wish to consult with legal authorities.
- 9) **Continuing Pastoral Care** The clergy and/or vestry should consult with the Bishop about additional resources for the healing and care of the congregation.

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Tab – H: A Model for an Information and Trauma Debriefing Meeting

The following procedures are recommended for the Information and Trauma Debriefing Meeting, but the church and the Bishop should consult in advance with their respective legal counsel (and, if counsel recommends, insurance provider(s)) before conducting such a meeting or undertaking any such actions:

A. Steps Prior to Meeting

- 1) **Select Leaders.** Carefully choose a Congregational Trauma Debriefing team and a leader or coleaders who have had experience with a debriefing or trauma-related process. It is important that the Rector or his representative be a visible participant in the debriefing, but not in the role of leadership.
- 2) **Schedule and Notify.** Schedule the debriefing as soon as possible after the complaint becomes public knowledge. Ensure that all members of the congregation and church staff are notified of the debriefing by telephone, e-mail, overnight mail, or other fast and reliable method of notification. It is important to get a wide participation, so that all who experience the trauma also share the Debriefing experience.
- 3) **Choose Meeting Place.** Hold the debriefing in an appropriate place, preferably on the church's property. Although an opening prayer is appropriate, this should not be a liturgical event.
- 4) **Address the News Media.** While the debriefing should not be confidential, it is important that no one be placed in jeopardy because of any disclosures made during that meeting. Therefore, it is preferable that the news media not be present for the debriefing, but meet after the debriefing with the church spokesperson and the Bishop.

B. Agenda for the Meeting

- 1) **Open the Meeting.** The Bishop or his representative should welcome the attendees, as should one of the lay leaders. The lay leader then should introduce himself/herself, explain the debriefing process, and outline the guidelines for the debriefing. It is important to keep the debriefing to the specified procedures. Leaders should be prepared for a lengthy meeting.
- 2) **Present the Facts.** Subject to the advice of counsel, the general facts and approximate chronology of the trauma should be presented verbally, supplemented by written notations such as a summary handout, or by writing notes on newsprint during the factual presentation. The goal is to ensure that all those present have a common record of the traumatic event. Note that this is not a time for feelings to be expressed, and the group may need some direction to withhold those feelings until the next phase of the debriefing.

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- 3) **Solicit Reactions.** Once an appropriate record has been presented, the lay leader should invite church members to express their reactions to the facts. (Some church members may need to be directed to express their own feelings and not those of others.) No feelings, however trivial, intense, or unusual, should be discounted, and no effort should be made to fix, soothe, or smooth them over. The responses simply are to be collected and heard.
- 4) **Examine Repercussions.** Once reactions have been expressed fully, the leader should ask those present to turn their attention to the repercussions of the event, and consider the congregation's future. This step bridges the trauma with the ongoing life of those involved in the trauma. It may be a time to explore some of the issues the congregation will face in the near future. As with the presentation of facts, the issues raised may be noted both verbally and with writings.
- 5) **Seek Context and Perspective.** Members of the congregation also should be invited to place the event within a context or perspective. There may be expressions of confusion, helplessness, or curiosity about how other groups have resolved an issue of this type. In this phase, people may have an awareness of paradox and pose some hard questions such as the following:
 - Why do bad things happen?
 - How can it be that such a talented priest/leader could be involved in misconduct?
 - Why do things like this happen in a church?
 - Where does the responsibility lie?
 - What about the resources of our faith?

Leaders have discretion whether to respond, or to simply allow others to speak.

C. Actions After the Meeting

- 1) **Plan for the Future.** The final step is planning. This could include a) scheduling a follow-up session one or two months into the future; b) discussing the ways in which the pastoral and sacramental needs of the congregation will be met; or c) describing the resources available to people who may need counseling or other specialized attention.
- 2) **Provide Trained Counselors.** For the immediate needs of those present, it is important that trained crisis professionals be available in the church building so that individuals or groups may process their feelings further. These professionals are present simply to listen and support people in integrating the trauma.
- 3) **Debrief the Debriefing.** After the debriefing, members of the Congregational Trauma Debriefing Team should meet to discuss their own experiences with the debriefing meeting, in order to do the following:
 - Plan the follow-up monitoring of the congregation in the future

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- Determine whether there are issues that will need further clarification
- Determine whether there are complicating factors, or factors that require special continuing attention
- Decide what the lay leadership of the congregation requires to address the issue further; and evaluate the debriefing meeting itself (or agree to do so at a later date).

Additional Information and Meetings

If new information comes to light after the first debriefing, further meetings may be held. Additionally, regular follow-up sessions with the congregation should be held during the first year after disclosure of the incident(s).

Additional Church Responses

Additional appropriate church responses may include:

- Regular prayer for the Complainant(s), the Respondent(s), and the congregation
- Preaching on the subject of violation of trust and liturgical acts of corporate penance
- Securing a safe place for the Complainant(s) and the Complainant's family in community life
- In the event that incarceration or other punitive action follows legal proceedings, developing a means for the congregation to deal appropriately with the person who may be imprisoned.

Congregational Follow-up: The First Year

Even with the best of care, a congregation that has experienced sexual misconduct will likely need an ongoing program of support and assistance, especially in the first year. This year will be devoted to a healing process, in which the congregation slowly will integrate the reality of its experience into its future. If such integration does not take place, the congregation may suffer from prolonged loss of energy, despair about the future, loss and/or isolation of some members, distrust of lay and/or ordained leadership or of the Bishop, and difficulty making decisions or taking risks.

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Suggested Follow-up Activities

Follow-up with the congregation may take any of several forms:

- 1) Meeting With Bishop. A meeting between the Bishop or the Bishop's representative and the vestry in order to assess the healing process of the congregation
- 2) Staff Input. Obtaining input from church staff (including an interim priest where present) about their observations regarding the incident and the Debriefing process
- 3) Study Groups. Establishing study groups to consider the issue of healing from sexual abuse, perhaps by reading a selected book for discussion
- 4) Self-evaluation. Conducting a congregational self-evaluation, through the use of a questionnaire or survey instrument
- 5) Focus Groups. Creating congregational focus groups to address the issue of where the congregation stands in its process of moving ahead
- 6) Committee on Congregational Life. Forming a Committee on Congregational Life charged with assessing the needs and planning programs for continued healing
- 7) Professional Consultant. Appointing a professional consultant experienced with issues of child abuse to work with the vestry and congregation on the components of the healing process

Using the Trauma to Help Others

Some churches, having worked through a history of child abuse, take up a special vocation in a related area. Such steps signify that the congregation has moved into the redemptive activity of letting its own pain be a gift for others. Among possible actions:

- ✓ Helping Other Churches. Offering help to other churches confronted with the same issues
- ✓ Sponsoring Programs. Sponsoring seminars or programs on ethics and sexuality
- ✓ Church Building. Offering the church building for use by community groups to address issues of child abuse
- ✓ Developing programs for young people about protecting themselves from abuse