

## ***Safer Church Policy of St. George's Anglican Church, Halifax***

SAFER CHURCH POLICY of Saint George's Anglican Church, a parish in the diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, (hereinafter referred to as “this Parish” or “the Parish”), located in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

This policy became effective as of 22 February 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

### **(1) PREAMBLE:**

WHEREAS this Parish seeks to be a welcoming community of trust and a place where everyone may feel safe, supported and respected;

WHEREAS this Parish recognizes that harm and abuse can arise in spaces presumed safe, and that the risk of abuse endangers the well-being of all involved with the Parish, and the Parish itself;

WHEREAS this Parish affirms its responsibility to protect the vulnerable, and accepts that it has moral, ethical, and legal obligations to take active, deliberate action to prevent and respond to the risks of abuse;

WHEREAS this Parish is part of the diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island and as such is obligated to heed diocesan canons, policies, guidelines, directives, etc., relevant to abuse prevention and response;

WHEREAS this Parish is to be guided in the matter of prevention of and response to abuse—as in all matters—by the teachings of Jesus Christ;

WE hereby adopt this as our Safer Church Policy. We commit ourselves and this Parish to abiding by its principles and following its guidance and direction in our efforts to create and maintain a safer church community for everyone, by taking active measures to prevent and respond to the threat of any form of abuse, committed by anyone involved in this Parish—children, youth, adults, seniors, men, women, laypeople, and clergy—against anyone involved in this Parish.

### **(2) APPLICATION**

This policy will apply to every relevant aspect of this Parish’s life, including its Intangibles, Governance, and Ministries. Every individual in this Parish is subject to this policy.

### **(3) SAFER CHURCH ABUSE RESPONSE AND PREVENTION POLICIES**

#### **1. Priority given to the well-being of individuals, in particular people who are vulnerable**

The Parish will never compromise its obligation to promote and protect the well-being of individuals, in particular children, youth, and other vulnerable people, by putting the interests of any individual, or its own interests, ahead of those of an individual who has made an allegation or disclosure of abuse, or who, it is suspected, has been abused.

If an individual who has been convicted of a civil or criminal abuse-related offence wishes to participate in the life of the Parish, the Parish will carefully consider what participation might and should include or exclude, seeking to extend the love of Christ and opportunities for reconciliation and restoration to that individual, but without undermining or compromising the Parish’s primary obligation to take active measures to protect people who are vulnerable.

#### **2. Compliance with civil law in matters related to abuse prevention and response**

The Parish will abide by all applicable, relevant municipal, provincial, and federal law and regulation, including, but not limited to, the reporting requirements and other obligations set out

in provincial child welfare legislation with respect to the abuse of children or youth, and to any relevant provisions of applicable adult protection statutes or other law.

### **3. Recognition of diocesan requirements and directives in matters related to abuse prevention and response**

The Parish will heed requirements established by the diocese in matters related to abuse prevention and response.

### **4. Cooperation with civil authorities in investigations of abuse**

The Parish will cooperate with child welfare/protection agencies and other civil authorities (e.g., the police) in any investigation of allegations, reports, disclosures or suspicions of abuse within the Parish.

### **5. Internal investigation of abuse in relation to a child or youth**

The Parish will **never** initiate or undertake an internal investigation, for its own purposes, of an allegation, suspicion, report, or disclosure of abuse of a child or youth, unless and until the civil authorities, including child welfare/protection agencies and the police, have made a final disposition in the matter and have indicated that it is appropriate for the Parish to undertake such an investigation. This does not preclude pastoral care to affected members of the Parish; however, pastoral care is a complement, not a substitute, to mandatory reporting and involvement of appropriate external authorities.

### **6. Development and implementation of SafeR Church Plan**

The Parish undertakes to create and implement an ongoing SafeR Church Plan. The deadline for implementation of the initial Plan is June 2015.

#### **A) Specific abuse prevention and response measures**

The Plan will identify specific abuse response and prevention measures in relation to its Ministries, Governance, and Intangibles. The Parish undertakes to i) establish and enforce these measures, ii) regularly monitor, evaluate, and test that they are prudent, reasonable, appropriate, and effective, and iii) adjust measures as circumstances warrant.

#### **B) Abuse response and prevention education and training**

As an integral part of the SafeR Church Plan, the Parish undertakes to provide, on a periodic and ongoing basis, abuse response and prevention information as well as awareness-building, education, and/or training opportunities, as appropriate, for

i) all members of the Parish

ii) all governance bodies and their members

iii) all individuals and groups involved in providing Parish programs, services, and activities

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#### **C) Annual review of SafeR Church Plan**

The Parish will undertake an annual review of the SafeR Church Plan, including this policy and the specific measures the Plan identifies. In addition, any allegation, disclosure, report, or suspicion of abuse in the Parish will trigger a review of this Policy and any relevant specific abuse prevention and response measures. Any deficiencies identified through this review are to be corrected as quickly as is reasonably possible.

**(4) APPROVAL OF THE PARISH SafeR CHURCH POLICY**

This policy was approved by two-thirds majority vote of the Annual General Meeting on 22 February 2015, and is effective immediately.

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## **APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS**

In this policy, the following words are defined as follows:

- a) "Abuse": Mistreatment of a person. Includes sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual, or psychological abuse, as well as harassment and bullying.
- b) "Child/children/youth": A "child" is a person under the age of 16, as defined by the Nova Scotia Children and Family Services Act. "Youth" in this policy refers to a person over the age of 12 years and under the age of 19 years.
- c) "Governance": The formal and informal structures and processes through which this Parish is controlled, organized, structured, managed, administered, etc.
- d) "Intangibles": Realities that cannot be touched or measured, but that are essential elements of the Parish, e.g., its culture, atmosphere, and environment.
- e) "Ministries": The programs, services, and activities of this Parish, both those it controls and directs, and those in which it participates or those which it supports.
- f) "The/this "Parish": Saint George's Anglican Church, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- g) "Personnel": A generic, collective term that refers to anyone who does work or performs services on behalf of and at the request of the Church. The word is to be understood broadly and may include laypersons and ordained clergy, employees, volunteers, students, interns, etc. It includes people working on a part-time, full-time, temporary, permanent, seasonal, casual, paid, or unpaid basis, and may include contractors, depending on the situation.
- h) The "Plan": The Parish's SafeR Church Plan.