

**CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY**  
**Northborough, MA**  
**SAFE CHURCH POLICY - SUMMARY**

*Heavenly Father, since you call us your children through your Son Jesus Christ, and place into our care the safety and welfare of the church's most important treasure, its members and guests, and particularly its children; give us a will to make the church a truly safe place for all people to gather and grow in Christ, and give us the wisdom to eradicate any misconduct in our midst through the power of Your Holy Spirit; grant this for the sake of your love. Amen.*

**THE POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH:** The Episcopal Diocese of Western Mass with additional material drawn from  
**BEST PRACTICES FOR THE MENTORING OF YOUTH,** Christian Association of Youth Mentoring  
**A MODEL SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY,** The Church Pension Group  
**GUIDELINES FOR ETHICAL CONDUCT,** Spiritual Directors International all of which Nativity fully endorses.

**PREAMBLE:**

The aim of this policy is to make our Church a safe place, safe for those who worship, safe for those who minister, safe for those who come in need, safe for children, youth, adults, and safe for all who seek or serve Christ. We believe that this policy helps us live out our Baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being.

**SCREENING AND SELECTION FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH, PRAYER MINISTRY APPOINTMENTS, SPIRITUAL DIRECTION, and PASTORAL VISITS:**

The Diocese will do background checks on all clergy who are deployed or licensed to officiate within the Diocese. The Diocese will also do background checks on any diocesan employees or volunteers who regularly work with children or youth. Nativity will do background checks on all employees and any volunteers who regularly work with children or youth, including mentors, as well as those who engage in spiritual direction, home visitation, or prayer ministry with adults by appointment. Background checks should include the following: a written application; a public records check; an interview; reference checks. The more access an individual has to children and youth, the more detailed a background check should be. Volunteers should not be permitted to work with children or youth or to engage in spiritual direction, prayer ministry with adults by appointment, or home visits until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least one year.

**BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH:**

Adults ministering regularly with children and youth shall support the concept that everything done with children and youth is intended to help them to be and to make faithful followers of Jesus Christ, safe in God's Love, shaped in God's image, serving in God's mission. Adults so ministering shall never, under any circumstances: provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs, provide or expose pornography; consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children's or youth event, be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs at any children's or youth event; engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior; engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth, either in-person, by phone, or electronically; discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies

**MONITORING PROGRAMS AND INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH:**

Plans for all events and ministries for children and youth should normally include at least two unrelated adults present at all times and notification of parents in advance, and parents shall have complete access to all Nativity programs and ministries involving their child or young person. In the case of screened, trained, and supervised mentors, one-on-one meetings shall take place at the church building when another unrelated adult can maintain visual contact with the mentor and mentee, or in a public location where other unrelated adults are present and visible. Those driving children and youth need parental permission and, if driving for a church event, will fill out an information form. No adult will be permitted to hold a conversation in a car which is parked. In the case where a mentor and mentee wish to go on an outing, such outings will be approved in advance by the mentoring ministry and parents and will be done in a group setting with other unrelated mentors and mentees, such that mentors and mentees can maintain visual contact with each other. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth outside of these circumstances, that adult shall immediately report those circumstances to the parents, to the Mentoring Supervisor, Rector, or Senior Warden if it is a parish situation, or the Bishop's Office if it is a Diocesan situation. Any new programs, trips or events that involve children or youth should be given prior approval by the parents, Rector and the Vestry. No event for children or youth shall take place in a private residence without prior approval by the Vestry.

Adults who work with children or youth within a congregation shall refrain from having a separate and private relationship with any unrelated child from the church away from sanctioned church events, youth activities and ministries, as such private relationships can create the greatest threat to these children and youth.

#### BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS FOR PRAYER OR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION MINISTRY WITH ADULTS:

All ministers shall support the concept that everything done in their ministry is intended to help those in their care to be and to make faithful followers of Jesus Christ, safe in God's Love, shaped in God's image, serving in God's mission. Those serving in Prayer Ministries shall meet regularly with the Nativity Prayer Ministry Group and will be overseen by the Rector. Those serving in Spiritual Direction ministries shall meet regularly with the Nativity Spiritual Directors Group and be overseen by the Refuge Board. Those visiting parishioners in homes will do so only in pairs and shall report their visit to one of the parish staff. Those bringing the sacrament will normally do so following a parish Eucharist. Prayer ministers, Spiritual Directors, or home visitors shall never, in the course of their ministry: provide clients or directees with non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs, or pornography, consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs with clients or directees, be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs at any appointments with clients or directees, engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults to engage in illegal behavior at such appointments, engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive relationship with clients or directees, or discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies with clients or directees. The Church prohibits all forms of sexual harassment in the Church, including unwelcome sexual advances and requests for sexual favors. The Church will not take any action in retaliation against anyone who, in good faith and with a genuine belief that he/she has been sexually harassed, brings or voices a complaint pursuant to this Policy or otherwise opposes sexual harassment. In addition, the Church will not tolerate any retaliatory acts by other individuals. Firearms and concealed weapons are prohibited at any church activity. Rectors may make special exceptions for off-duty police officers or others required to carry firearms.

#### EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Nativity shall direct its clergy, lay employees and volunteers who work with children or youth, those who serve in prayer ministry by appointment, those who serve as Spiritual Directors, and those who visit others in their homes to attend training every three to four years on how to prevent abuse of children, adults, and the elderly, and how to promote healthy boundaries in church settings. Each parish shall maintain a record of those who have attended such training.

#### RESPONDING TO CONCERNS:

Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies in a parish environment shall immediately report the violation to the Safe Church Officer, Rector or priest, or Senior Warden. Anyone who knows of a violation of these policies in a diocesan environment or by a clergy person shall immediately report the violation to the Bishop's office. Anyone who has reason to suspect that a child under 18 is being abused, or a senior citizen is being abused, whether at church or away from church, shall report it to the appropriate civil authority (see contact below). In case of imminent danger, call 911.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

The Bishop of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts is The Rt. Rev. Douglas Fisher, DFisher@diocesewma.org, 800-332-8513. Contact him with any safe church concerns about a diocesan employee or program. The Safe Church Officer for the Diocese is the Reverend Tanya Wallace, allsaintschurchrector@gmail.com. Contact her with general questions about safe church policy. The Intake Officer for the Diocese is the Reverend Molly Scherm, mollyscherm@gmail.com. Contact her if you are a victim of harassment or abuse by a clergy person or other diocesan employee, or to report suspected misconduct by them. The Rector of Nativity is The Rev. Chad McCabe, cmccabe@churchofthenativity.org. Contact him to report suspected misconduct by a church employee or lay minister, or if you are a victim of harassment or abuse, or if you suspect a situation abuse of a child under 18. The Senior Warden of Nativity is Deb Heseck, debheseck@gmail.com. Contact her to report suspected misconduct by a church employee or lay minister. The Parish Safe Church Officer is Deb Heseck, debheseck@gmail.com. Contact her to report suspected misconduct by a church employee or lay minister, or if you are a victim of harassment or abuse. The phone number to report suspected child abuse in Massachusetts is: (800) 792-5200, elder abuse 800-922-2275, or you can call the Department of Social Services in your area.

*Gracious Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Savior. Amen.*

A complete version of this policy can be found on the Vestry bulletin board outside of the parish offices.