
Diocesan SafeR Church Policy

Note: Words/terms that appear in boldface are defined in Appendix A, at the end of this document.

(1) SAFER CHURCH: PURPOSE AND GOAL

The purpose of SafeR Church is to create, restore, build, nourish, and sustain communities of trust and trustworthy communities in the parishes of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, and in the Diocese itself. The goal is to create safer church *for everyone*, by taking active measures to prevent and respond to the threat of

- *all forms of abuse*—sexual, physical, spiritual, psychological, emotional, etc.—including bullying and harassment;

committed

- *by* anyone involved in our parishes and diocese—**children, youth, adults**, seniors, men, women, laypeople, and clergy;

committed

- *against* anyone involved in our parishes and diocese—**children, youth, adults**, seniors, men, women, laypeople, and clergy.

(2) PURPOSE OF THE DIOCESAN SAFER CHURCH POLICY

This Bishop’s Policy of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (hereinafter referred to as the Diocese) is being established and adopted to guide the Diocese in its efforts, in spirit and in action, to fulfill the purpose and meet the goals of SafeR Church, stated above. The effort to combat **abuse** in all its forms is an essential element of the Diocese’s

- Mission: To participate in God’s mission of reconciling the world to God through Jesus Christ, through its
- Vision: To create and sustain Christ-centred, mission-minded, ministering communities of faith, and is a sign of its commitment to fulfilling the
- Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion, in particular the fourth of these, which calls upon the church to “... challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation.”

(3) GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The Diocese seeks to be a community that reflects the love of God revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, which call Christians individually and collectively to recognize that every person is worthy of respect and love, and to demonstrate that respect and love in word and action, in the knowledge that we are each accountable to God and to one another for our words and actions and for the impact they may have on others. The Diocese seeks to model, lead, encourage, and support Parishes and individual Anglicans in living out this call.

2. This call and the obligations it entails form a sacred trust, and **abuse** of any kind is a breach of that trust. Therefore, the Diocese must take active measures to prevent **abuse** and to respond to it, fully and appropriately, if it does occur, by

- a) identifying and implementing prudent, reasonable, appropriate, and effective measures to prevent and respond to **abuse** in all its forms in the Diocese, working continually to make itself a community of trust and a trustworthy community, and
- b) fulfilling its leadership role by encouraging and supporting Parishes and individual Anglicans in their efforts to create, build, restore, nourish, and sustain communities of trust and trustworthy communities.

The Diocese recognizes that the threat or risk of **abuse** is real, not simply an historical reality but a present danger, and that it has and does cause great suffering and harm to individuals, families, and communities, including church communities, and endangers the well-being of all involved with the Diocese, the ministries of the Diocese, and the wider communities in which we live.

3. The Diocese also recognizes that it has obligations under applicable civil law, as well as responsibilities and authority under canon law, to

- a) manage the risks of **abuse** that are inherent or foreseeable in all enterprises of the Diocese; and
- b) provide support and leadership to Parishes on these matters in relation to the aspects of the life of Parishes over which the Diocese has responsibility, authority, and/or control (e.g., canons on parish governance, parish property, etc.).

(4) SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy applies to all areas of the Diocese's **Ministries, Governance, and Intangibles**, including its internal operations as well as those related to parish matters over which the Diocese has responsibility, authority, and/or control. All personnel of the Diocese are subject to this policy.

(5) SPECIFIC SAFER CHURCH ABUSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICIES

1. Creation and Implementation of Diocesan SafeR Church Plan

- a) The Diocese will develop and implement a **SafeR Church Plan**, based on the principles included in this SafeR Church Policy and consistent with its contents. The SafeR Church Plan will be developed and may be implemented in stages, beginning in the spring of 2015. The Plan will consist of two parts:
 - i. The Diocesan SafeR Church Policy, and
 - ii. A list of specific measures the Diocese will implement in its efforts to prevent and/or respond to abuse.
- b) Appropriate measures will be identified based on audits of the **Ministries, Governance, and Intangibles** of the Diocese and will include measures related to
 - i. Internal Diocesan matters (e.g., operation of Synod office, Diocesan Youth Conference (DYC), Teens Encounter Christ (TEC))
 - ii. Matters related to Parish life over which the Diocese has responsibility, authority, and/or control (e.g., canons on parish governance, parish property, etc.)

- c) Elaboration of the elements of the **SafeR Church Plan** will be undertaken in consultation or collaboration with the appropriate individuals, bodies, groups, offices, etc., as identified by the Bishop, and will be submitted for review, amendment, approval, etc., to these individuals, bodies, groups, offices, etc., as appropriate.
- d) Resource implications—human, financial, and otherwise—of each measure recommended for adoption will be identified in **the SafeR Church Plan**. Resources will be allocated to allow implementation of the measures identified in the **SafeR Church Plan**, based on their priority.
- e) With respect to measures related to internal diocesan matters, the Diocese shall:
 - i. Implement and enforce these measures;
 - ii. Monitor, evaluate, and test that the measures are prudent, reasonable, appropriate, and effective; and
 - iii. Adjust measures as circumstances warrant, including auditing new or changing ministries and positions so that suitable measures may be identified before such ministries are begun or positions advertised.
 - iv. Update and amend the SafeR Church Plan (i.e., policy and measures) annually.

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

- a) In the development and the implementation of its SafeR Church Plan, and in addressing any allegation, report, disclosure, or suspicion of abuse, the Diocese's commitment is to
 - i. never compromise its moral, ethical, and legal obligations to promote the well-being of individuals, in particular, children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
 - ii. not put the interests of any individual or its own interests, ahead of the interests of those of a person who has made an allegation, report, or disclosure of abuse or who, it is suspected, has been abused.
- b) If an individual who has been charged with and/or convicted of a civil or criminal abuse-related offence wishes to participate in the life of the Diocese, including participating in diocesan events or organizations, the appropriate officers or personnel of the Diocese 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 Diocese's primary obligation to take active measures to protect vulnerable people. A relevant protocol will be established as part of the Diocese's SafeR Church Plan.

3. Compliance with the requirements of the civil law in relation to matters of abuse

- a) The Diocese will comply with all requirements established by civil law, in particular, relevant provincial statutes in relation to allegations, complaints, reports, disclosures, or suspicions of abuse of **children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults**, and this compliance will be reflected in the measures outlined in the Diocese's SafeR Church Plan.

- b) As part of the elaboration of the SafeR Church Plan, the Diocese will establish and/or review current policies, procedures, protocols, and practices in relation to relevant matters, including but not limited to, reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse to the civil authorities as required or permitted by law, and responding to any allegation or suspicion of abuse, in an effort
 - i. to provide appropriate pastoral care to all involved
 - ii. to exercise caution and due diligence in respecting the rights of individuals, in maintaining confidentiality and protecting personal privacy, as required by civil or canon law,
 - iii. to avoid taking any actions that would compromise investigations being undertaken by civil authorities.

4. Building awareness of and commitment to the purpose and goals of SafeR Church

As an integral part of its SafeR Church Plan, the Diocese shall provide, on an annual and ongoing basis, abuse response and prevention awareness-raising information as well as awareness-building, education, and/or training opportunities, **as appropriate**, for:

- a) all members of the Diocese;
- b) all governance bodies of the Diocese and their members;
- c) all individuals and groups involved in providing Diocesan programs, services, and activities; and
- d) all individuals and groups participating in Diocesan programs, services, and activities.

It is understood that what is appropriate and necessary will vary widely, depending on such factors as the level of direct involvement of individuals with people who are vulnerable, and/or their office, and/or their level of legal responsibility for such matters.

ADOPTION OF POLICY

This policy will be adopted as a Bishop's Policy and, as such, has been approved by the Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island on this date:

Signed:

The Right Reverend Ronald Cutler, Bishop of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

APPENDIX A
to the SafeR Church Policy

of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

DEFINITIONS (Note: These definitions are assumed in the SafeR Church Policy. Not all of the words/terms defined below appear explicitly in it.)

“Abuse”: Mistreatment of a person, including, but not limited to sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, or financial abuse, as well as harassment and bullying.

“Adult”:

- In Nova Scotia, the *Age of Majority Act* defines an adult as a person 19 years of age or older.
- In Prince Edward Island, the *Age of Majority Act* defines an adult as a person 18 years of age or older.

“Adult in need of assistance or protection” or “Vulnerable Adult”:

- In Nova Scotia, the *Adult Protection Act* defines an “adult in need of protection” as a person who is or apparently is over the age of 16 who is abused or neglected, and who cannot physically or mentally protect or care for herself or himself.
- In Prince Edward Island, the *Adult Protection Act* defines an adult as someone who has reached the age of majority (18). The Act also defines an “adult in need of assistance” as an adult “requiring assistance to ... protect [himself or herself] against abuse or neglect, due to infirmity, disability or other incapacity, whether physical or mental.” The Act also defines an “adult in need of protection” as meaning an adult “requiring protective intervention to maintain the safety and well-being of the adult or preserve the adult’s estate, ... due to infirmity, disability or other incapacity, whether physical or mental, the adult ... is experiencing, and is unable to protect himself or herself against, abuse or neglect.”

“Child/children”:

- In Nova Scotia, the *Children and Family Services Act* defines a child as a person under the age of 16. In exceptional circumstances, an individual who is 17 or 18 may be considered a child for purposes of this Act and therefore entitled to the protections it offers.
- In Prince Edward Island, the *Child Protection Act* defines a child as an individual under the age of 18.

“Corporation of the Diocesan Synod of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island”:

The legal corporation incarnated in the chief governing body (the Diocesan Synod) of the Diocese, led by the elected Bishop of the Diocese, and whose ongoing work is conducted by Diocesan Council, teams and task groups, and synod office staff. The term “the Diocese” will be used throughout this document to stand for the corporation of the Diocesan Synod of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

“Governance”: The formal and informal structures and processes through which the Diocese is organized, structured, managed, administered, etc., including the General Synod and Diocesan Council, the Vision, Strategy, and Support Teams (VSST), and formal and ad hoc committees, along with their supervisory and reporting structures, etc. Governance may also include those areas in which the Diocese has responsibility for, or authority or control over, a matter that is internal to the operation of a Parish or Parishes (e.g., Canons regarding parish governance, parish property, etc.).

“Incident”: A suspicion, disclosure, complaint, allegation, report, etc., of abuse or harm.

“Intangibles”: Realities that cannot be touched or measured, but that are nevertheless real and essential elements of the Diocese, e.g., its culture, atmosphere, and environment (including expectations, attitudes, unwritten rules, values, norms, leadership styles, perceptions, assumptions, trust, lack of trust, respect, suspicion, etc.).

“Manage”: To take active measures in an effort to prevent and/or respond to abuse. Note that “To manage” **does NOT mean** “to ensure,” and no such guarantee is intended.

“Ministries”: The various programs, services, and activities undertaken by, or in the name of, the Diocese.

“Parish/es”: Generally, Parishes refers to the congregations of Anglicans in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward. Legally, in the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, a Parish is a legal entity, incorporated either in Nova Scotia or in Prince Edward Island. The parish corporation consists, at any given time, of the Rector, Wardens, and other members of Parish Council currently in office.

“Personnel”: A generic, collective term that refers to anyone who does work or performs services on behalf of and at the request of the Diocese. The word is to be understood broadly and may include laypersons and ordained clergy, employees, volunteers, student, and postulants. It may also include people working on a part-time, full-time, temporary, permanent, seasonal, casual, paid, or unpaid basis, and may include so-called “independent contractors,” in particular those who have ongoing contracts with the Diocese, depending on the situation.

“SafeR Church Plan”: The blueprint for action the Diocese is taking or intends to take to prevent and respond to the threat or risks of abuse. The primary elements of the SafeR Church Plan are

- 1) the Diocesan SafeR Church Policy, and
- 2) the list of specific measures that will be implemented.

“Vulnerable Persons”: Individuals whose life circumstances temporarily or permanently reduce or eliminate their ability to protect themselves from harm. Circumstances could include but are not limited to age, mental capacity, physical, psychological, social, emotional, or financial distress. Every individual may be a “vulnerable person” at some time.

“Youth”: For the purposes of this Policy, a person under the age of 25 (as defined by General Synod). Note:

- In Nova Scotia, the *Children and Family Services Act* does not define a “youth.” However, it does define a child as, generally, someone under the age of 16. (The NS *Age of Majority Act* identifies an adult as someone 19 or older.)
- In PEI, the *Child Protection Act* defines a “youth” as an individual 12-17 years of age. (The PEI *Age of Majority Act* defines an adult as a person 18 years of age or older.)