

St. Sanctuary Church Safe Church Policy and Procedures



Approved by Council _____, 2009

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REMEMBER:

This is an example of a whole policy (without the forms and appendix).

DO NOT just change the church name and insert your own.

**Good policies are those that are “owned” by the congregation and
can enthusiastically be implemented. Good policies require
active involvement of many leaders and much discussion.**

St. Sanctuary Church Safe Ministry Policies

A Commitment to Safer Community

In recognition of the spiritual and public trust given to this faith community, St. Sanctuary is committed to being a true sanctuary, both nurturing and protecting its members and visitors. Worship of God requires openness, trust, honesty, intimacy, vulnerability and a safe, supportive community. Abuse and harassment are, therefore, violations of the faith and commitment shared by this congregation. Accordingly, the congregation will maintain official policies and procedures that assure prevention of instances of abuse, appropriate intervention into alleged incidents of abusive behavior and care for all involved. These procedures will be reviewed by the Congregation Council annually.

Definitions

Adult: a person 18 years old or older.

Vulnerable Adult: any person over 18 years of age with diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities. This includes anyone who by California law is deemed vulnerable to elder or dependent adult abuse, as well as anyone who is under extreme stress and less able to advocate for themselves.

Minor: any child from infancy to eleven (11) years old and any youth twelve (12) through seventeen (17) years old.

Staff: any person employed by the church.

Clergy: any called pastor of the church.

Volunteer: unpaid people involved in a ministry, activity or service at St. Sanctuary on or the church's behalf.

Primary Volunteers: adult volunteers who, in the normal course of their duties, are expected to be in a regular supervisory capacity, including anyone who participates in overnight activities with minors present more than twice a year and/or who provide transportation to minors or vulnerable adults without other adults in the vehicle more often three times a year.

Secondary Volunteers: volunteers who infrequently supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs or activities, generally no more than four times a year or for one program or activity during a year

that lasts less than a month (i.e. assisting with preparation for the Christmas pageant, or teaching one “unit” of Sunday School for a month). Secondary volunteers *always* work with a primary volunteer or staff person present.

Secondary volunteers also include all persons who:

- provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle infrequently, generally no more than four times a year
- work or assist in the nursery four or fewer times a year, whether on an emergency basis or otherwise
- participate in overnight activities with children or youth once or twice a year.

Secondary volunteers also includes teenagers (any volunteer at least twelve [12] years old or older, but under the age of eighteen [18] enlisted to assist with the care of children). They are not expected to be alone with youth in their care.

It is the policy of the church that ABUSE OR HARASSMENT OF A MINOR OR OF AN ADULT WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

Types of Abuse:

Physical abuse the deliberate, non-accidental physical injury to a minor or adult. This also includes willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment.

Emotional abuse: maltreatment of a minor or vulnerable adult which elicits low self-esteem, undue fear, anxiety, or shame, or other damage to a person’s well-being caused by such acts as angry fault finding, humiliating and/or belittling a person for mistakes or failures, and deliberate inattention to someone’s emotional needs. Emotional abuse causes mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in a person’s growth, development or psychological functioning.

Neglect: failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, health care, psychological nurturing, education, supervision, or other basic necessities. This includes failure to protect a minor or vulnerable adult from harm.

Sexual abuse: any sexual activity with a minor or vulnerable adult, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child. Sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All sexual abuse is an exploitation of a person’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action.

Financial abuse: taking advantage of the vulnerability of an adult by deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of the person’s belongings or funds.

Sexual Harassment: use of one's authority or power, either explicitly or implicitly, to coerce another into unwanted sexual relations or to punish another for his or her refusal; or the creation of an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment through verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment involves repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to her or his wishes. It

includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition for instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual: or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

California law also protects staff from harassment related to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

Screening Practices

To protect our children, youth and vulnerable adults from potential victimization, **all** church members and visitors will be checked using the National Sexual Offender Public Registry (www.nsopr.gov). Staff and applicants for primary volunteer positions with vulnerable populations will also be fingerprinted.

All adults who have regular contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must have been a church member for six (6) months or associated with the church for one (1) year. Potential volunteers shall fill out a Volunteer Information Form and give it to a pastor (who will remove the confidential information and store it in a locked file).

To assure a match between the volunteer task and the potential volunteer's skills and experience, the direct supervisor of the program area in which the applicant has interest will:

- (a) check at least two of the potential volunteer's references and
- (b) conduct an interview with the applicant after reviewing the Information Form.

Reference checks and interviews will be conducted by the leader of the program in which the applicant will work or by others persons designated by the program leader. A team of interviewers may be used. During the screening process, potential volunteers who have been in the church less than a year must provide a photo identification, such as a driver's license, as a check against the use of pseudonyms.

Persons asked as references may include employers, former pastors, and persons who have supervised applicants in church work previously. Those persons may be suggested by applicants on their Information Form or selected by the assigned interviewer(s). The references can be done by phone, mail, or in person.

Standard questions for the reference check and applicant interviews can be developed by each program supervisor. Notes of the results of the interviews with the applicant will be kept in the appropriate pastor's locked files, along with the Information Form. This information will only be released to authorized persons with a demonstrated need to know. A separate file will be maintained on each volunteer. The program pastor

and the direct supervisor will make decisions regarding fitness as a primary volunteer.

Before beginning his or her work with vulnerable populations, the potential volunteer must indicate understanding and compliance with this policy and sign the Personal Safety Covenant and the Driver Authorization Form, if appropriate. Also, to help ensure the safety of youth while participating in mission and service projects, fellowship retreats and camps, and other youth activities, supervising adults are required to maintain current certification in basic first aid and CPR certification. It is also *recommended* that other clergy also be trained in first aid/CPR. The church shall provide a yearly workshop on this, or pay the costs for training. Nursery workers and others serving young children may also want training in infant and toddler CPR.

While the church is waiting for background information and references, applicants may begin working with minors or vulnerable adults, but only in closely supervised settings. Failure to receive satisfactory responses in a timely manner may result in dismissal or withdrawal from volunteering in church programs.

A screening committee will be established to do the interviewing and reference checks, as well as review the results of criminal background checks. The information gathered will be protected from dissemination, except for the committee's final judgment about whether the volunteer can work in the suggested position. All screening records and the list of person choosing not to complete or failing the screening process shall be secured in a locked file with access permitted only to approved personnel.

Record Keeping

Working with the screening committee, the designated Keeper of Records will be responsible for assuring that the information form, interviews, driver clearances, reference checks and background checks are done, but will not know the details of any discussions or results of reference or background checks related to the potential volunteer. Based on the decisions of the screening committee, the Keeper of Records will maintain an updated list of:

- (1) approved primary volunteers, along with record of their compliance with the requirements for training, their Volunteer Information Forms, and copies of their Personal Safety Covenants
- (2) eligible drivers who can transport others on behalf of the church and their annual Driver Authorization Forms, insurance documentation and copy of drivers' licenses.
- (3) those parents allowing photographs of their children to be used in church publications, as well as the signed Publicity Release and Consent portion of the Medical and Emergency Contact Information and Release

These lists will be accessible to anyone who asks.

In secure confidential files, the program pastor will maintain the confidential section of the Volunteer Information Form, the fingerprint results from CA Department of Justice, and comments from the reference checks and interviews. The pastor will protect any information about why

Directors and volunteers who are the primary person responsible for an overnight or off-site trip must collect signed (1) Activity Permission and (2) a copy of Medical

Release and Emergency Contact forms for each child and youth participating, and carry those two documents with them of the activity. The original Medical Release and Emergency Contact forms should be kept with the appropriate Director or Pastor who is most responsible for that child or youth.

Disqualifications

Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of a criminal background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a volunteer from participating in the leadership, sponsorship or supervising of any activities or programs with children, youth or vulnerable adults:

- Prior incident(s) of sexual misconduct or other forms of abuse of vulnerable individuals
- Felonies and misdemeanors that resulted in harm to another person
- Crimes related to the possession, use or sale of drugs or controlled substances

Only a pastor may view information obtained from the Department of Justice (via fingerprints) and the confidential information on the Volunteer Information Form.

Training Standards

Volunteers and staff will be required to receive training to help them gain an appreciation for maintaining a safe congregation. This training will help volunteers understand the church policies, prevent abuse, identify abuse in the future if they see signs of it, and respond appropriately.

To help ensure the safety of everyone while participating in activities of St. Sanctuary,

- A. Three hours of child abuse prevention education and training is required for all clergy, staff and **primary volunteers** before they start their work with minors or vulnerable adults or, if that is not possible, one hour of child abuse awareness training before they start their work and the rest of the training within three months of starting.
- B. One hour of child protection education and training is strongly recommended for all parents and secondary volunteers before they start their work with children or youth.
- C. All clergy and any staff working with or around children must complete training in the legal mandates for reporting suspected child abuse. The California State training for mandated reporters is located on-line at www.humanservices.ucdavis.edu/resource/camrt/index.asp (or link through the kyros.org website under Resources for child abuse prevention).
- D. Supervising adults are required to maintain current certification in basic first aid and CPR certification. It is also *recommended* that clergy also be trained in first aid/CPR. The church shall provide a yearly workshop on these topics or pay the costs for training.
- E. All trainings are to be renewed every three years or at an interval recommended by the training organization.

At least one person trained in child/adult abuse, prevention, and reporting and at least one person trained first aid, CPR, and emergency response must be present at each church event.

The Keeper of Records will document volunteers' and staff's completion of training about relevant church policies and procedures and local reporting laws for child and dependent adult abuse.

Safe Practices for Ministry with Children and Youth

Minimum Age Requirements

Because we believe that people under the age of 18 cannot be expected to have developed the maturity and judgment needed to be fully responsible for peers or persons younger than they, St. Sanctuary will not permit individuals or groups of persons under age 18 to be solely responsible for younger youth or children, including infants. A primary volunteer or Youth Director must be present for all activities with children and youth.

Child or Youth	Staff or Primary Volunteer	Helper
Infant care (age 0 through Kindergarten)	25 yrs	18 yrs
Church School (1st - 5th grade)	25 yrs	12 yrs
6th - 8 graders (middle schoolers)	25 yrs	18 yrs
9th - 12 graders (high schoolers)	25 yrs	20 yrs

Recommended Ratios

Whenever possible, the following minimum ratios will be used in all events involving children and youth:

Child or Youth	Primary Volunteer or Staff	Child/Youth
Infants	1	2
Toddlers	1	5
Preschoolers	1	7
Church School (1st - 5th grade)	1	10
6th - 12 graders (mid-high & high schoolers)	1	15

No minor or vulnerable adult will be left unsupervised after a church activity.

Team Leadership

Whenever feasible a minor will *not* be in the primary care of only one adult. Teams of adults (preferable make and female) will supervise activities. This policy has four purposes: It provides for more than one adult to help ensure the appropriate levels of supervision, it protects adults from unfounded allegations, and it lessens the possibility of an adult becoming a “guru” who thrives on the dependency of minors as well as an adult having undue influence over an individual. It also provides coverage for the group when there is an emergency situation or need to work with a minor separately from the group.

The Two-Adult Rule

At least one approved primary volunteer and a secondary helper must be present at all times during a church-sponsored class, meeting, event or ministry when children or youth are involved. If no second adult can help or be in the immediate vicinity, the activity/class will be cancelled or a roving supervisor will repeatedly, randomly monitor the room. Two adults must be present with children younger than first graders.

Youth over the age of 12 may assist an adult in supervising children's activities; however, such assistance does not alter the recommendation that at least two adults be present.

Visibility

All staff members, volunteers, and the youth and children themselves should not be afraid to be seen modeling nurturing and respectful behavior. All rooms used as gathering places for children and youth will be centrally located and visually accessible so that volunteers and staff are easily observable by other adults and there is no isolation or secrecy. Visibility is especially important when supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children. When children or youth are present, windows may not be covered and doors may not be blocked. If there is no window in the meeting room's door, the door must remain open whenever children are present. All unnecessary adjacent rooms and closets should be locked. Activities should never take place in private rooms, offices or isolated parts of a building.

Open Door Policy

All events involving children, youth and vulnerable adults should be open such that parents, care givers, and others can observe the activity.

Pastoral Care and Counseling

The pastoral staff encourages anyone in the congregation to ask for spiritual guidance and emotional support whenever the need arises. The pastors offer **pastoral care** whenever there are life crises such as death, illness, divorce, loss of job, or any other transition or circumstance that is causing distress. This pastoral care includes prayer, direction, and encouragement offered to individuals or families in our congregation who are struggling spiritually, physically, or emotionally for any reason. A program staff person or lay volunteer* may also provide pastoral care, but should do so under the supervision of an ordained pastor.

However, the pastors on our staff do not offer ongoing, comprehensive **counseling**, regardless of their training. Pastors may meet with individuals/families up to three times in the same year for the same life issue, but shall then refer the individual/family to a professional therapist, spiritual director, or other specialist outside the church for more ongoing counseling or support. (If the pastor refers the individual/family to a counselor and that counseling relationship does not work out, the pastor may meet with the family once more to seek to refer to another appropriate person.)

Pastors will maintain **confidentiality** about their pastoral care sessions unless someone is at risk of harming him/herself or someone else; then in compliance with denominational standards and state law, community intervention specialists and/or protective services will be contacted.

* For example, a Stephen's Minister or Deacon.

Pastors and other staff will never receive **compensation** for pastoral care or counseling extended to congregants.

For pastoral care of **minors**, team counseling is preferable whenever possible. A male/female team is generally appropriate for counseling either gender. If team counseling is not feasible, parental permission shall be obtained before a pastor, director or volunteer can meet privately with a child or youth. Prior permission may be granted by parents to cover a particular time period (i.e., a school year) for their child to receive pastoral care from a particular pastor. another adult must be notified of the location of the meeting and persons involved. If possible, female adults will counsel female youths and males counsel males.

Pastoral care of minors should be done in a public place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others, thereby guarding carefully to avoid seclusion. At any session, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session—or the pastor, director, and responsible adult should be easily visible through the door's window. If necessary, one-on-one meetings may also be in an openly visible, public area, such as the courtyard or a coffee shop. One-on-one pastoral care sessions shall not be conducted in a private residence without an adult family member present.

Volunteers should not meet with youth more than three times to discuss the same issue, because they are not prepared or supported for long-term counseling or formal therapy. Adult leaders are encouraged to refer youth or vulnerable adults who they suspect have a serious need for counseling to professionals in the community. Questions about appropriate referrals should be discussed promptly with the youth program leader, Christian Education Director, or the pastor.

One-to-one programs (like mentorships) shall not be sponsored by St. Sanctuary. Persons interested in one-to-one programs will be referred to agencies skilled in the supervision of such programs, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

Getting Help

Protecting an individual's privacy has limits. Volunteers must tell a clergy person **if a minor discusses harming himself/herself or another, committing a crime, or being abused**. Questions about such cases or other issues of confidentiality must be discussed promptly with the youth pastor (if ordained) or the pastor. Conferring with a pastor on sensitive issues is **not** considered breaking a confidence; the pastor will protect the confidential nature of the discussion, as will civil authorities if the pastor is mandated by law to report the situation to them.

Boundary Issues

It is important for the adult workers to be clear about appropriate behaviors. Adult workers must be attentive to appropriate dress codes, appropriate use of language, and appropriate demonstration of affection and encouragement. There must be no use, sale or distribution of alcohol or illegal drugs at activities involving children or youth. These boundary issues will be included in the annual training for youth and children workers and volunteers.

Overnight Activities

It is never appropriate for an adult chaperone who is not a family member to share a bed with a youth. Males and females attending events must not share the same sleeping quarters and should have separate access to bathroom facilities when possible.

Off-site Activities

Whenever children, youth, or dependent adults will be off campus, and outside the direct supervision of their parents/guardians, a permission form shall be signed by the parents/guardian. The leaders of those off-site activities must have a list of names, emergency contacts and medical conditions with them at all times, so that the leaders have permission to treat a child, youth, or dependent adult if they are injured or become sick during the off-campus event.

Transportation

To ensure all minors and vulnerable adults are safely transported to church-sponsored activities that require volunteer drivers, St. Sanctuary requires that all drivers complete an Authorized Driver Form, and attach proof of insurance and a copy of a valid driver's license. Any church-sponsored event requiring driving will always be within the limits and recommendations of our insurance policy. In addition, drivers must be 25 or older if they are to drive other passengers under the age of 18. When driving youth, one adult volunteer driver is acceptable as long as there are two or more youth in the car. A minor may be alone in a car with a church volunteer or staff as long as the minor's parents have signed the waiver. Of course, children may travel alone with their custodial parents or guardians without any forms.

To aid the adult volunteer driver in the event of an emergency, the driver should maintain possession of every passenger's health-history, and medical release form in the car at all times. In the event passengers change cars, it's recommended that the drivers have this information for every youth or child who is attending the event. Authorized driver policy applies to transportation to and from the point of origin. Getting to and from the point of origin is outside of the policy.

Informal Contact (Independent of Church Activities)

Informal contact refers to phone calls, text messaging, letters, or face-to-face contact between an adult volunteer and a minor that is not connected to official church activities. The church recognizes that informal contact between volunteers and youth frequently occurs. However, volunteers should seek permission of parents before having informal contact with their youth. The volunteer should clearly let the parent know the nature of the contact and that it is not part of church activity. Parents are responsible for monitoring this informal contact.

Gifts

Those working with youth are generally discouraged from giving personal gifts to youth. When the giving of personal gifts is desired, the volunteer must first notify the

minor's parents and youth pastor. Gifts can easily be misinterpreted. Gifts given to groups of young people are appropriate, such as graduation presents or awards of participation.

Romantic Involvement

No volunteer or staff working with youth or vulnerable adults is allowed to date or become romantically involved with any recipient of his or her ministry. Any volunteer or staff with prior incidents of sexual misconduct may not volunteer with children, youth or vulnerable adults or minister to them in any way. There are no exceptions to this guideline.

"Check-in/Check-out" Procedure for Young Children

Parents/guardians will sign in their children when leaving them in the nursery or kindergarten class and sign them out when picking them up. A child will be released only to the person who dropped him/her off, unless otherwise instructed by the person who leaves the child. Under no circumstances will a child be released from the nursery to a person under the age of 18. Permission slips will be available for parents or guardians to sign, authorizing alternate options for the release of the child(ren).

Involvement of Parents and Guardians

Parental permission shall be obtained in advance for involvement in church sponsored overnights, off-site or special events or whenever an adult might be spending time alone with a child in an unsupervised, one-adult situation.

When planning an event for youth and children that will require adult drivers and/or adult chaperones, it is necessary to provide at least two weeks advanced notice to the potential adult volunteers. Such notice is important to give the adults enough planning time and for the organizers to ensure the roster of volunteers is completely filled. The event will not be able to proceed without sufficient adult driver and/or chaperone duties confirmed.

Only assigned volunteers may be in the nursery or preschool, with the exception of nursing mothers and parents called to the room to calm an upset child.

Bathroom Protocol

For a child and/or vulnerable individual needing to go to the bathroom and who requires assistance, the following will apply:

- If the child and/or vulnerable individual needs assistance getting to a bathroom an adult will accompany her/him to the door of the bathroom. The adult will wait outside the bathroom for the person to exit the bathroom and accompany him/her back to the program area from which they came.
- If the child and/or vulnerable individual needs assistance in the bathroom the following will apply:
 - A. If a child, a parent or guardian needs to be contacted to take such child to and from the bathroom.

B. If a child and a parent or guardian is not available then a second adult must be present with the adult who is assisting the child and/or vulnerable individual.

Sunday School superintendents or other church leaders will make random visits to all classrooms and periodically check the bathrooms that are being used by children and youth during St. Sanctuary functions.

General Safety

A copy of St. Sanctuary's Safe Church policy and a first aid kit with instructions will be kept in the area where minors and vulnerable adults are present. An escape plan and the location of the fire extinguisher must be posted near each classroom door. Phone and/or intercom access must be available in those areas or nearby (unimpeded by a locked door).

Supervision

Communication

Volunteers must meet regularly with program leaders, who in turn must meet periodically with the pastor to discuss any issues regarding these guidelines. Appropriate topics that must be discussed include problems, accountability, policy clarification, personal feelings, or other issues that may interfere with safety at St. Sanctuary. That open communication also includes a periodic review with each volunteer regarding satisfaction and success in his or her volunteer assignment.

Policy Compliance

Church staff will supervise church activities on an ongoing basis and may make unannounced visits into classes or other program sites from time to time, to assure policy compliance.

Primary volunteers will carefully supervise the secondary volunteers, minors and any other adults involved with the activities for which that primary volunteer is responsible.

All church participants should be aware of unsupervised children, risky situations, and other issues that might prevent St. Sanctuary from being a safe place to worship and thrive.

The chairperson of the Council is responsible for having an audit performed annually on or before September 15 and January 15 to ensure that all staff/volunteers who work with minors or vulnerable adults are compliant with this policy and that the policy itself is working effectively.

Specific Acts and Omissions in Violation of the Policy

The following acts or omissions are violations of this Policy, will not be tolerated or accepted during any activity or program, and are to be immediately reported to the designated program staff after the safety of any person involved has been assured. The staff will determine appropriate response to any policy violations by volunteers.

Response may include training, temporary leave from the position, reassignment, or suspension.

1. Verbally abusive language such as belittling, derogatory name-calling, bullying or harassment.
2. Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor or vulnerable adult. Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor or vulnerable adult.
3. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor, or any person and a vulnerable adult.
4. Physically abusive behavior or infliction of bodily injury to a minor or vulnerable adult.
5. Mental or emotional injury to a minor or vulnerable adult caused or exacerbated by the volunteer.
6. Physical neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of St. Sanctuary.
7. The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of St. Sanctuary.
8. The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs.
9. Consumption or distribution of or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a St. Sanctuary activity in which minors are present.

Response and Reporting Procedure

All participants in St. Sanctuary's ministry are encouraged to contact church leaders if they are ever concerned about a safety issue, whether it's a hazardous sidewalk or they witness or hear about risk of harm to a child, youth or vulnerable adult in the church. Any member or guest of St. Sanctuary is encouraged to act without hesitation or fear of reprisal if he or she witnesses, experiences, or hears about situations involving abuse, harassment, or exploitation.

- *All concerns and allegations shall be taken seriously and receive some type of action or response immediately, according to church policy.*

Information about the concern, observation, or allegation can be given to a Pastor, Youth Director, a member of the standing Response Team or anyone serving on _____ (the governing board). An individual with a complaint or allegation may be asked to complete a written report describing the basis for her or her concern.

A. The complainant[s] need not be the victim of the inappropriate behavior, but instead may be an observer or someone who has been told information by a victim. Any committee of St. Sanctuary may also initiate the formal complaint process. Any person bringing a harassment or exploitation complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

B. Whoever is first told must *not* ask investigative questions or investigate the complaint or concern, but should make notes on what is said with as much detail as is communicated and report the information to the appropriate leader or committee for resolution—*unless* the concern involves suspicions of abuse, in which law enforcement or protective services may be contacted directly.

No church staff or volunteer should confront a parent or parents or suggest any suspicion of child abuse to the child or youth in question. Rather, any suspicion should be communicated confidentially to the Director of Christian Education, the Director of Music Ministries, the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, or a pastor. If reported to the Director of Christian Education, the Director of Music Ministries, or the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, the suspicion will be reported to a pastor. No other third party will be told any details of any reported matter, unless that person has a legal, business or pastoral reason to be informed of the results of any investigation, or any actions taken in response to such investigation.

- *If the concern relates to suspected abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult, protective services (and other specialists if appropriate) must be contacted.*

Clergy and staff who have direct responsibilities for children and youth are mandated reporters of suspected abuse; however every person who has reason to suspect abuse of our children, youth or vulnerable adults should consider it his/her duty to comply with reporting process in the State of California. Clergy are also mandated by California law to alert authorities of any suspicions of

abuse of vulnerable adults. This is regardless of whether the suspected abuser is part of our community.

Any person who intends to file a report with civil authorities may alert the Pastor, Associate Pastor, or the Youth and Children Ministries staff, who will help in making the report. A report of suspected abuse must be made within 24 hours after a person has reasonable suspicion of possible current or future abuse. The mandated reporter need not investigate the concern nor determine the person responsible for the abuse or neglect, only be able to explain the cause for the concern.

Some mandated reporters find that it is helpful to make notes before calling CPS. The written information about individuals involved and the description of the incident will be of value in making the oral report on the phone and can then be easily transferred to a reporting form that must be sent to CPS within 36 hours. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities.

Hayward (local) Police Department	911 or (510) 293-7029
Alameda County Child Protective Services (CPS)	(510) 269-1800
Alameda County Adult Protective Services (APS)	(510) 567-6894

The pastor may speak with the principals in an alleged incident immediately after a report has been made, if civil authorities allow such communication. Often pastors are advised that any contact with principals may interfere with the investigation. The Pastor's objective will be to encourage candor, cooperation with CPS, and maintenance of church relationships through the ensuing process. Reported persons should be asked to stop any of their ministerial duties until the concern is resolved. The Pastor will follow insurance guidelines in this matter.

When the alleged abuse occurs within the ministries of St. Sanctuary, whether the alleged perpetrator is staff or lay, the Pastor will report the situation to the Church Council and church insurance company immediately. The pastor also will notify the denominational authorities as soon as allegations of abuse are received and keep those authorities aware of the congregation's actions throughout the process, up to and including the final resolution of the situation.

- *If the concern relates to situations internal to the church (such as abuse on the campus, sexual harassment, inappropriate behavior by a volunteer, or other serious complaint), convene the Response Team.*

A Response Team's main purpose is to facilitate appropriate response to any concern or allegation. That includes:

- investigating the complaint
- suggesting remedies to the leadership
- assuring that pastoral care is extended to anyone affected by the complaint (victims, families, respondent, the whole congregation, etc.)
- monitoring the leadership's cooperation with law enforcement, the media, and insurance carriers, while maintaining confidentiality as much as possible

A Response Team with no fewer than three members, at least one male and one female, will be called together by the pastor or Moderator from the members previously appointed by the Church Council. The Team will familiarize itself with the terms of this policy and will follow these procedures of St. Sanctuary for dealing with a complaint or alleged sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or other forms of harassment. Other forms of harassment include discrimination, exploitation, or intimidation based on race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or physical ability.

If a volunteer or staff person is accused of inappropriate behavior, his or her immediate supervisor should be contacted and the accused may be suspended until an investigation is complete. However, the accused shall not be confronted until the safety of the minor or vulnerable adult is secured. If the accused is a paid employee, the executive officers of the church, the senior minister and chair of the personnel committee will decide whether or not his or her income shall be maintained or suspended until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

The Response Team will assure that one of several approaches are taken to address the complaint or concern:

1. The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the respondent (the individual accused of abuse, exploitation or harassment).
2. The complainant can report the incident to a pastor, in an effort to resolve the matter informally.
3. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the complainant may request that the Response Team institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:
 - a. The Response Team shall advise the Senior Minister and executive officers of the receipt of all complaints and shall keep them apprised of ongoing steps and actions taken. If the Senior Minister or executive officer is the subject of the complaint, the Response Team shall notify an executive officer who is not the subject of the complaint. NOTE: If a clergy person is the subject of the complaint, the matter will be immediately reported to the Northern California Nevada Conference
 - b. The Response Team shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged exploitation or harassment, including the respondent (the subject of the complaint), and from others who may have pertinent information, such as qualified professional consultants, and present such information to the respondent's supervisor and supervisory body (i.e., Ministerial Relations Committee, Board of Church Ministries, etc.).
 - c. The _____¹ shall make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may include:

¹ Fill in this blank with the party that should make the resolution decision: Senior Pastor, executive officers, Response Team, respondent's supervisory body, an appropriate subcommittee thereof, or any combination.

- i. Finding that exploitation, abuse or harassment did not occur. Then steps must be taken to restore the individual's credibility.
- ii. Finding that exploitation, abuse or harassment has occurred, and that the appropriate body of the church is called upon to take action accordingly. Such action may include one or more of the following:
 - A formal reprimand, with defined expectations for changed behavior;
 - Recommending or requiring psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment;
 - Probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
 - Dismissal from employment or authorized volunteer leadership position, and, in extreme cases, terminating affiliation with, or membership in, the church.
- d. In determining the most effective resolution, victims and the victim's family may be asked what action they would like to take in the matter, and fully cooperate to address their requests within the bounds of a legal and prudent response.
- e. The Response Team may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions.

f. In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes harassment or exploitation, consideration shall be given to the record of the alleged incident(s) as a whole and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.

If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the respondent's supervisory body, he or she has the right to appeal to the Moderator or to the Vice Moderator if the Moderator is the subject of the complaint, who shall refer the matter to the Church Council. The subject of any such appeal to the Church Council shall be limited solely to whether the procedures of this policy were followed. The matter will not be reconsidered on the merits, and the decision of the Church Council will be the final resolution of the matter. If the Church Council determines that the procedures of this policy were not followed, it will refer the matter back to the respondent's supervisory body to complete the processing of the complaint in accordance with these procedures.

A written summary of the Response Team's proceedings will be maintained and protected from anyone without a legitimate right or need to know.

Adequate care must be shown for the well-being of victims, the respondent and families involved, as well as the congregation itself. That care includes informing those involved in the situation of the steps that are being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the response process. Situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for the individuals' privacy and confidentiality. Accusatory attitudes and statements should be avoided. No victims should be blamed in any way, nor should their stories be minimized.

A.

The senior pastor, or his/her designee, is the only person(s) authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the senior pastor or that designee, so that the church can emphasize through the media to the public the church's position on abuse, its concern for the victim(s), and the extensive steps the church taking to address the present occurrence and to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for other vulnerable minors and adults.

Non-Church Groups

Whenever another church or organization uses or rents the church facility, that group will give St. Sanctuary a "certificate of insurance" that names St. Sanctuary as covered by that group's policy. This requirement does not apply to anonymous Twelve-Step groups.

The church or organization may also be asked to comply with the Safe Church policy, by screening and supervising its own volunteers at the same standards as St. Sanctuary.

Accessibility Standards

St. Sanctuary welcomes people of all abilities into the life and ministry of the church. We work toward dismantling the barriers that may otherwise deter persons with disabilities from participation in worship and church events. To that end, we will maintain the following standards and continue to evaluate accessibility from various perspectives, making adjustments and additions as indicated.

Persons with disabilities are invited to participate in determining needs and establishing standards for accessibility.

Removing Barriers to Mobility

- Accessible parking spaces
- Curb cuts in sidewalks
- Ramps at entrances
- International accessibility signs posted
- Accessible rest rooms
- Accessible water fountains
- Accessible elevators
- Wide aisles in sanctuary and meeting rooms
- Shortened pews to accommodate wheelchairs in worship venues
- Lift to chancel area planned for sanctuary remodel

Removing Barriers to the Senses

- Worship services and meetings interpreted in American Sign Language (ASL)
- Assisted listening devices available for worship
- Video screen displays Order of Worship, including words to hymns and congregational prayers
- Large print bulletins available for worship

- Perfumes and other odoriferous materials will be discouraged
- Multi-sensory elements included in meetings and worship services: kinesthetic, auditory, visual, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory elements utilized

Convicted Sex Offenders in the Congregation: Balancing Radical Hospitality with Sanctuary

A Registered Sex Offender is any person who has been convicted of a sexual offense and is now required to register his/her whereabouts with local law enforcement. Megan's Law allows the public to have information about the whereabouts of Registered Sex Offenders and the information about particular high-risk offenders is easily accessible via www.meganslaw.ca.gov. This policy also covers anyone who was convicted on a sexual abuse charge, even if the names of these persons does not appear on the on-line registry, and anyone who may not be required to register because they pled down their offense to a misdemeanor.

St. Sanctuary is a welcoming church that both nurtures and protects its members and visitors. In the event that a known sex offender is a visitor, constituent, or member in the life of the congregation, the following policy will be used.

1. If the convicted sexual offense involves a member of the congregation, the Registered Sex Offender may be asked to leave the membership.
2. There will be consultation among the Staff-Parish-Pastor Relations Committee (SPPRC), appropriate staff, and key volunteers about the specific policy regarding the Registered Sex Offender.
3. The specific policy will address ways of limiting the exposure of the Registered Sex Offender to vulnerable populations.
4. The senior pastor, chair of SPPRC, lay leader, and the district superintendent (and others as thought appropriate) will meet with the convicted sex offender to inform him or her of the specifics of the policy.
5. The senior pastor, chair of SPPRC, lay leader, and the district superintendent will enter into a covenant with each convicted sex offender. This covenant will document the convicted sex offender's conviction and will outline the policy specific to his or her conviction history and be attentive to the safety needs of St. Sanctuary Church.
6. The spouse or significant other of the offender may also be asked to enter into and sign a covenant of behavior.
7. The convicted sex offender may be restricted from access to the church campus and may be barred from all congregational activities if he or she refuses to sign the covenant, if he or she refuses to comply with its stipulations, or if in the judgment of the pastor, the convicted sex offender's behavior threatens the safety of any member of St. Sanctuary Church.
8. The convicted sex offender's participation in worship may be limited to exclude positions of authority, or assumed authority, such as ushering or any position of

real or assumed authority over children or dependent adults.

9. There will be consultation with congregants who need to know (families of children or youth, etc.) about the status of the convicted sex offender and the congregation's policy and covenants regarding this person (and potentially the spouse/partner).
10. This policy is designed to avoid temptation, not to punish the convicted sex offender.
11. The convicted sex offender may be offered counseling and support by staff and/or volunteers in the congregation. He or she may also be given information about supportive services and counseling outside the congregation.
12. The congregation may make any other provisions deemed necessary to appropriately protect and care for members of the congregation.