

## **Introduction**

The Diocese of Central Florida has had a long-standing commitment to protecting our children. Even before the Church, through the Church Insurance Company, mandated training designed to help prevent Child Sexual Abuse the Diocese was providing this training. We have been active in promoting healthy and healing practices not only because we think it prudent to exercise due diligence but also because God calls us to care for these little ones. It is the right and proper thing to do.

The following policies come out of many years of work within the Episcopal Church at every level. The majority of what follows comes to us from the Church Pension Group, in partnership with The Nathan Network, which has provided *Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse* to the Episcopal Church.

These policies should be adapted by the congregation, school or church related institution to provide comparable standards and training for outside groups who make use of the facilities of the church, school, or institution. Written certification from these groups shall be done on an annual basis and kept on file by the church, school or institution.

## **History of these Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse**

The Committee on Sexual Exploitation ("COSE") was created by resolution of the 70<sup>th</sup> General Convention in 1991 to address issues of sexual misconduct in the Episcopal Church and has continued its work through the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention in 2003. In 1999 in preparation for the 73<sup>rd</sup> General Convention in 2000, it conducted a survey of 100% of the domestic dioceses on how dioceses were dealing with issues of sexual misconduct. The survey indicated, among other things, that a conference for those who work on issues of sexual misconduct in the church was needed.

As a result, in June 2001 COSE and the Office of Pastoral Development sponsored the first national Pastoral Standards Conference. An extraordinary gathering of one hundred twenty-five bishops, chancellors, clergy and laity from 70 dioceses attended and unanimously called for review of existing sexual misconduct policies and development of the "next generation" of policies.

COSE gathered and reviewed policies submitted by 70 dioceses with the intention of circulating as model policies those that incorporated and reflected current best practices based on the Church's experience in the area of sexual misconduct over the past decade. COSE concluded that none of the policies gathered was a truly state-of-the-art, "next generation" policy that could serve as a model for those dioceses planning on revising and updating their current policies. COSE determined that it did not have the time or resources to create new state-of-the-art, next generation policies.

Encouraged to do so by COSE, with requests from a number of dioceses to do so, to support prevention efforts, and based on its own perception of the need, The Church Pension Group undertook to develop model child sexual abuse prevention and response policies.

Just prior to the meeting of the House of Bishops in March 2003, 47 bishops attended a training session on "What Every Bishop Should Know About Pedophiles and Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in the Church" put on by the Office of Pastoral Development and The Church Pension Group. Out of

this training session came a Mind of the House Resolution presented by the 47 bishops in attendance that was approved unanimously by the House of Bishops.

Among other resolves, the resolution called for development of a statement of general expectations of behavior in this church by clergy, lay employees, and volunteers, when engaged in ministry with children and youth. The resolution stated that these expectations should be specific enough to serve as clear directions and guidelines, but general enough that each diocese would expand upon or develop the specific content of policies and procedures and implementation according to the particularities of each diocese. The Bishops unanimously committed to reviewing current diocesan policies, and revising them as needed. In addition, the Bishops committed to working together to provide appropriate training, education, and materials to support each diocese in the five identified areas.

The Bishops also committed to putting forth a resolution to the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention in 2003 as the statement of general expectations called for by the March 2003 House of Bishops Mind of the House Resolution. Resolution B008, Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse, was submitted and passed at that General Convention.

***[This History section was drawn, in large part, from the Explanation section of Resolution B008 as submitted to the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention in 2003]***

### **Children’s Charter and Safe Church Ministry at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Resolution B008 and these *Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse* call the church to respond in new and intentional ways to care for, be responsible to, and create safe space for children. Foundational to Resolution B008 and the work of the Church Pension Group’s partnership with The Nathan Network is the *Children’s Charter for the Church* (General Convention Resolutions 1997- B005 and 2000 – D045). The *Children’s Charter* holds advocacy for children as central to the mission and ministry of the church. The *Charter* calls the Church to love, shelter, protect, and defend children within its own community and in the world, especially those who are abused, neglected, or in danger.

***These policies were adopted by the Diocesan Board, Diocese of Central Florida, October 13, 2005.***

## **Acknowledgments**

These *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse* were written in response to those expressing a need for updated or revised child sexual abuse policies based on the Church’s experience with these issues over the past decade. Nearly two years in development, these *Policies* have evolved through several iterations before taking their current form.

Principal author, Dr. Monica Applewhite, is President of Religious Services for Praesidium, Inc., a Texas consulting firm specializing in the development of policies and training materials for the prevention of child sexual abuse in organizational settings.

Sally Johnson, Vice President- Risk Management and Education headed up the project team at The Church Pension Group responsible for the development of these *Policies*.

Many groups in the Church reviewed drafts or responded to presentations about the content of various iterations of these *Policies* and we are grateful for their candid and thoughtful feedback and suggestions. These included The Nathan Network Steering Committee, the national Committee on Sexual Exploitation, the Bishops and Chancellors of Province I, the Bishops and Chancellors of Province IV, the Western Chancellors, the 2003 Conference of Diocesan Administrators, the 2003 Business Management Institute, the Office of Pastoral Development of the House of Bishops. Inclusion of a group in the Acknowledgements does not imply the group’s endorsement, approval, or any other action regarding these *Policies*; it simply acknowledges their participation and contributions to the development process.

## **Disclaimer**

The Diocese of Central Florida and Church Pension Group provide these *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse* in partnership with the Nathan Network, in the hope that they may assist dioceses, congregations, and other Episcopal entities in developing policies for the prevention of child sexual abuse in ministries and church activities for children and youth. They are intended as a guide, not a manual. They do not cover every issue that you may want to consider in the development of such policies. Nor do they necessarily reflect in every aspect the laws of the State of Florida. The Diocese of Central Florida, the Church Pension Group and The Nathan Network are not engaged in giving legal or other professional advice or services by providing these *Policies*.

## **A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of the Episcopal Church**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We your bishops are steadfastly committed to seeing that the Episcopal Church is a community of safety and health for all people. The Body of Christ, the Church, must be a place where adults, children, and young people find the love and blessing of God, and where no one might be hurt and where their hurts may be healed.

We are all aware of the reports in the media, during the past year and more, of incidents of sexual misconduct in churches. Many of these tragedies have involved children and young people. While the Roman Catholic Church and many secular agencies have also been caught up in trying to address the damage done to our children by sexual predators, the Episcopal Church is not immune to this scourge in our society and we must respond to it honestly and forthrightly.

Our Church has repeatedly upheld our mandate to be a haven of safety for all. The Scriptures teach us that every human being is made in the image of God; and our Lord enjoins us to receive and serve the least among us as we would receive and serve him. The mandates of our baptismal covenant include seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves, striving for justice and peace for all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

Because of these mandates of love, respect, service, and justice, we have acknowledged our obligation to articulate clear standards about sexual harassment and misconduct, and to ensure that all our work and ministry is guided by them. We have been committed to sexual conduct training and abuse prevention for all our clergy and lay leaders. We have been clear that exploitation and abusiveness are always unacceptable in our common life. We have made efforts to become aware of the spiritual and emotional damage that is done by sexual misconduct, and to do our best to guarantee that none who come to us will suffer such harm. In spite of our best efforts, it is sad when we discover that we have not done enough.

While we were in conference together at Kanuga, North Carolina in the spring, many of us had the opportunity to learn more about pedophilia, a form of predatory sexual behavior that has caused untold harm in our society and in the Body of Christ. It is especially important that we as a church focus on understanding and preventing pedophilia.

We need to be aware that pedophilia is a reality in our society, which can be manifest in the church, and we must be very clear about the nature of this tragic problem. Pedophilia is pervasive; one in eight males and one in four females will be molested before they reach the age of eighteen. Of reported cases in the general population, sixty percent (60%) of abusers are known to their victims, thirty percent (30%) are family members or relatives, and ten percent (10%) are strangers. We must be aware that the Church is a community which offers predators the opportunity to become known and trusted by parents and their children.

We also know that offenders are predominantly male and heterosexual. We must take great care not to equate pedophilia with homosexuality in our minds or our conversation and we must never assume that only men molest children in this way.

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What we have learned most recently about the repetitive nature of pedophilia makes it imperative that we take very clear steps together to do the screening necessary to ensure that our children encounter God's love among us, and that we do all in our power to protect them from the distorted perceptions of love offered by predators.

In a Mind of The House Resolution passed at Kanuga in March 2003, we committed ourselves to support the development of church-wide policies to safeguard our children; and until such time as these policies are adopted, to revisit and revise our diocesan policies to ensure that ministries provided to the children among us will be life-giving and free from abusiveness of any kind.

Among the basic provisions we have committed to implement, delineated in Resolution B008 on the "Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse" adopted at the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention in 2003, are:

1. Thorough screening and selection of clergy, lay employees and volunteers who work with children and youth;
2. Articulation of clear behavioral standards for interactions between clergy, lay employees, volunteers and children and youth;
3. Careful, continuous monitoring of all programs and interactions involving children and youth;
4. Provision for education and training of clergy, lay employees and volunteers for work with children and youth; and
5. Guidelines for responding to concerns about behavior or Allegations of abuse.

In addition we asked the Presiding Bishop to create a working group from among our members to partner with the Church Pension Group, the Church Insurance Corporation and other agencies and appropriate organizations to develop the materials necessary to provide the Church with consistent expectations and standards.

We realize that in many of our congregations, persons who offer to take on ministries with children and youth are a blessing to an understaffed education or formation program for children or youth. The overwhelming majority are trustworthy and caring persons whose ministry will bear great good fruit.

But we must acknowledge that there are times when predators use the church as an opportunity for sexual abuse of children and adolescents who can suffer severe spiritual, emotional, and sometimes physical damage as result. In response to such times we are called to acknowledge two truths: that human sin and failure are very real, and that God's grace, mercy and power are always strong enough to heal and transform our pain.

We have no intention to call our members to suspicion and mistrust. We do recognize the need to call our members beyond the naiveté of unquestioning confidence and into the care and discipline which must characterize our choices where children are concerned. Jesus called us to be as wise as serpents and as gentle as doves. In the case of pedophilia, our consistency is carefully screening, choosing and training all who work with children and youth will serve to allay any concerns about favoritism or carelessness, prohibiting those who have harmed children from ministries involving children, while providing the ability to firmly guide those who might harm children into other areas of ministry which serve Church and contribute to our mission.

Some helpful materials will be available through your diocesan office after the first of the year. We ask that as you make use of them you will remember the challenge our Lord provided to his followers, "unless you become as children you cannot enter the kingdom of God," We renew our

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commitment to ensure that our church is a community of love and care for every person. We ask that you join us in doing all in our power to see that all our members find among us a safe place where they can be open and trusting and able to know the reconciling love of God in Christ that makes all things new.

A Collect for the Care of Children

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children; Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (BCP 829)

Bishops of the Episcopal Church

August 6, 2003

## **Resolution B008 as adopted by the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention**

*Resolved*, That the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention of The Episcopal Church recommit itself to the vision of the role of children in the church as articulated in *A Children’s Charter for the Church* as adopted by the 72<sup>nd</sup> General Convention in 1997. The *Charter*, among other things, calls the church to:

- Receive, nurture, and treasure each child as a gift from God;
- Love, shelter, protect, and defend children within its own community and in the world, especially those who are abused, neglected, or in danger; and
- Advocate for the integrity of childhood and the dignity of all children at every level of our religious, civic and political structures; and be it further

*Resolved*, That this Church acknowledge that the times and circumstances demand that the church articulate a clear and firm commitment to the safety of all, especially children; that we support this commitment with clear and firm policies and procedures for the well-being of all; and that we commit this Church to being and becoming a place where children and youth are safe, especially from abuse and neglect; and be it further

*Resolved*, That each diocese develop and adopt policies for the protection of children and youth from abuse that address the following:

1. A screening and selection process for all clergy, lay employees, and volunteers who regularly work with children or youth. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:
  - a. A written application
  - b. A public records check
  - c. An interview
  - d. Reference checks
  - e. A general provision that volunteers not work with children or youth until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months
2. The articulation of behavioral standards for clergy, lay employees, and volunteers working with children or youth. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:
  - a. Respect for the privacy and dignity of children and youth by not putting them in inappropriate unmonitored one-to-one situations
  - b. Age-appropriate arrangements for sleeping, bathing, dressing, or showering
  - c. The prohibition of dating, romantic involvements, or sexual contact with a child or youth
  - d. The prohibition of any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of children and youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program
  - e. Guidelines for physical contact and expressions of affection that define appropriate and inappropriate behaviors
  - f. The prohibition of discussing their own sexual activities and fantasies with children or youth
  - g. The prohibition of the non-sacramental use, possession, distribution or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs
3. The monitoring of programs and interaction with children and youth. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:
  - a. The prohibition of the development or initiation of new activities for children or youth without prior approval from the appropriate decision-maker(s)
  - b. The recognition that the ordinary standard is the presence of two unrelated adults for any activities involving children or youth
4. Education and training. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:

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- a. Child abuse prevention for clergy, lay employees, and volunteers who regularly work with children or youth
  - b. Specialized training for those who recruit, screen, or select persons to work with children or youth
5. Guidelines for responding to concerns. Dioceses are encouraged to consider:
- a. Inappropriate behavior with children or youth
  - b. Violation of policies for the protection of children or youth
  - c. Suspected abuse of children or youth; and be it further

*Resolved,* That each diocese shall report to the House of Bishops Committee on Pastoral Development prior to the Spring 2006 meeting of the House of Bishops with a copy of its adopted and implemented policy and an evaluation of the history of its use. A summary report shall be made to the House of Bishops Spring 2006 meeting and a full report made to the 75<sup>th</sup> General Convention.